

I've Been Scared of Sleeping With the Lights Off

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I've Been Scared of Sleeping With the Lights Off

by [odymcbea](#)

Summary

“I’m not going to hurt you,” Technoblade said adamantly.

“Dream, I need Dream.” Tommy sounded desperate, his eyes darting across the beach as if searching for his porcelain savior.

Technoblade's pointed ears pricked up at that and his instincts buzzed angrily up his spine. Even the *idea* that Dream had somehow roped Tommy into a dependence on him was enough to make Technoblade want to break every bone in the fucker’s body.

“You don’t need him,” Technoblade insisted. “Come on, Tommy. Let me take you home.”

“I don’t have a home,” Tommy whispered, and the tremble of his voice broke something in Technoblade’s stone heart.

“Yes, you do,” he said, as steadily as he could with what might as well have been an arrow lodged in his chest. “You have one with me. That will never change.”

Tommy bit his lip. His ears were quivering slightly, his tail swishing against the sand in a gesture of uncertainty.

“Please, Tommy.” Technoblade softened his voice, the way he used to when Tommy was just a kit in his scrawny, teenage arms.

Or, yet another Exile!AU.

Notes

Warnings: Panic, mentions of burn injuries, use of a gag to keep a character quiet (but not maliciously! I would say it's out of necessity and it doesn't last long), mentions of vomit, implied emotional/mental manipulation, brief mentions of branding

This is Traumatized Raccoon Tommy and Protective Piglin Technoblade for my heart <3

Also! This is an AU where Wilbur didn’t blow up L’Manberg and Technoblade didn’t commit war crimes about it lol. Things were resolved peacefully, but Dream is still very bitter, so he still gets Tommy exiled. Technoblade and Wilbur aren’t there to protect him because Wilbur

still had a bit of nervous breakdown and Phil took him off-world for a bit to help him recover (He's making music :)). Technoblade just had some shit to do. But when Technoblade gets back from his off-world venture, he is NOT happy to find Tommy in the state he's in.

As always, this is about the CHARACTERS, not the CCs :)

Title is from Sex Sells by Lovejoy!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Technoblade smelled Logsteadshire before he saw it. It smelled like a pyre. The scent of sulfur lingered under his tongue even after he spat it onto the grass.

He left Carl tied to a thin tree a good distance away, conscious of the way the sight and sound of the horse's armor might attract unwanted attention. Silently, with stealth unfitting of his stature, Technoblade crept towards the beach.

When he'd left L'Manberg almost four months ago now on an off-world venture, he'd done so with the confidence that Tommy would be safe in the now-established nation. Wilbur wasn't around anymore— And *gods*, did that hurt to think about. Technoblade missed his so-called twin like the sky missed the sea— so now, the responsibility of looking after Tommy fell to Technoblade.

Sure, Technoblade wasn't necessarily friendly with all of L'Manberg's citizens, but that didn't mean that they weren't decent people. At the very least, he'd thought Tommy would be safe there for a few months while Technoblade went off on his adventure.

No one had ever accused Technoblade of being too trusting, but right now, all he could think about was how he never should have put his faith in anyone but family.

When he returned to L'Manberg to reunite with his youngest brother, he was greeted with cold stares. It took a long time before he was able to get a real answer out of anyone, but finally, he managed to intimidate the tallest teenager known to man into admitting just where Tommy was. And who was with him.

Technoblade had never liked Dream. He didn't like the way he'd befriended Wilbur in the midst of Wilbur's troubles, pretending to be his friend as paranoia ate away at the best parts of Technoblade's brother. He didn't like the disappointment Dream had exuded when Phil took Wilbur off-world for an extended rest, like Dream had just lost his favorite toy. He didn't like the way Dream inserted himself into other's affairs, particularly those of the minors of the server. And he especially didn't like that stupid porcelain mask.

When Technoblade found out it was Dream looking after Tommy in exile— *Exile*. Tommy was *fifteen*— Technoblade stopped at his Arctic home just long enough to sharpen his sword. Then he went looking for his little brother.

The first time Technoblade caught sight of Tommy on the beach, he didn't register him as anything more than a stranger. Then he looked again and found a shell of his baby brother.

He was too lanky, too thin, too Wilbur-at-his-worst. His tail was matted and dirty, the rings of color mixing with enough mud to almost conceal them. His ears were pinned back perpetually, a sign of fear that made nausea roll in Technoblade's gut. He looked tired. He looked anxious. He looked like the little kid he was.

Open and peeling burns littered his hands and arms, and the little bandage on his cheek didn't entirely cover the cut it was meant to protect. The injuries looked fresh and Tommy was wincing visibly in the salty sea air. Technoblade was going to kill someone and he was going to make it hurt.

With a deep breath, Technoblade stepped out of the thin woods. The ground shifted under his feet as dirt and grass gave way to sand beneath them.

"Tommy."

Tommy startled, a yelp falling from his lips. "Dream, I was just—"

Then he caught sight of Technoblade.

"Techno?" Familiar blue eyes blinked up at him, but the fear in them rendered them almost unrecognizable. Tommy's voice was wobbly, nothing like the fierce snarl Technoblade had grown to love. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here for you."

Technoblade thought it was a pretty simple concept, but the way Tommy's eyes widened told him it was anything but.

Before Tommy could argue, Technoblade continued: "I know what's been going on. I'm here to take you home."

Tommy looked sick. "You... know?"

Oh, Technoblade didn't like that. He didn't like that one bit.

Truth be told, he didn't know the details of Dream's interactions with Tommy, but he'd gathered enough information from Ranboo to feel comfortable coming to a few conclusions. Tommy's reaction to the idea of Technoblade being privy to such knowledge had only confirmed what Technoblade most feared: Whatever Dream was doing to Tommy, it was bad. Bad enough that Tommy didn't want anyone to know about it.

"I know you need help," Technoblade said simply, even though anger was burning in his chest. "I know I don't want Dream anywhere near you."

Tommy flinched. Technoblade almost felt guilty, but the feeling vanished at Tommy's next words:

"He... he cares about me." Tommy's voice was unsteady, uncertain, uncomfortable. Un— un— un—. It didn't sound like Tommy at all, and Technoblade hated it.

"No," Technoblade said firmly. "He doesn't."

Tommy's ears pricked up in indignation, like they used to when he was little. (*He's still little, Technoblade's instincts purred.*)

“He cares more than you,” Tommy snapped, flushing an angry red. That, at least, was familiar; Technoblade was almost relieved to see a little spark of the old Tommy, even if it was igniting against him. “You left me!”

“I didn’t know,” Technoblade said. It was useless— he had no real defense here. “I thought you were safe in L’Manberg with Tubbo and the others. I didn’t... I didn’t know.” There was nothing more he could say in his defense, but what he had wasn’t enough.

Tommy was still eyeing him fearfully and Technoblade hadn’t missed his little shuffling steps backwards. “You’re here to hurt me.” He said it like he’d already decided.

“I’m not,” Technoblade said, taken aback at even the idea. He offered him his hand. “Please, Tommy. Let me help you.”

At the movement, Tommy stumbled back. “No.” His jaw was clenched so tight, Technoblade was almost worried for his teeth. “No, Dream told me! He told me you wanted to hurt me!”

“He lied,” Technoblade snarled, and like an instinct, Tommy flinched back.

His eyes were wide as his voice dropped to a whimper. “Please. Please don’t hurt me.” It was jarring to hear Tommy so afraid; it made Technoblade want to be sick. He hadn’t thought it possible, but he found he preferred Tommy sharp, claws out against the world, even against those who loved him. This frightened, belly-up rabbit was not the little brother Technoblade knew so well. Someone— *Dream*— had turned his little brother into prey.

“I’m not going to hurt you,” Technoblade said adamantly.

“Dream, I need Dream.” Tommy sounded desperate, his eyes darting across the beach as if searching for his porcelain savior.

Technoblade's pointed ears pricked up at that and his instincts buzzed angrily up his spine. Even the *idea* that Dream had somehow roped Tommy into a dependence on him was enough to make Technoblade want to break every bone in the fucker’s body.

“You don’t need him,” Technoblade insisted. “Come on, Tommy. Let me take you home.”

“I don’t have a home,” Tommy whispered, and the tremble of his voice broke something in Technoblade’s stone heart.

“Yes, you do,” he said, as steadily as he could with what might as well have been an arrow lodged in his chest. “You have one with me. That will never change.”

Tommy bit his lip. His ears were quivering slightly, his tail swishing against the sand in a gesture of uncertainty.

“Please, Tommy.” Technoblade softened his voice, the way he used to when Tommy was just a kit in his scrawny, teenage arms.

Tommy blinked, wide and frightened. Then he exhaled, his throat bobbing.

“I want to,” he said hesitantly, and Technoblade’s heart lifted. His next sentence sent it plummeting. “But I can’t.” Tommy looked resigned. “I’m sorry,” he said tearfully. His voice trembled, like he expected Technoblade to erupt in anger at his words. “I’m sorry, I can’t go with you.” Tommy’s eyes were darting again, but this time, it was driven by paranoia. As if searching for some sort of spy, some watcher hiding in the trees beyond the beach. “He— If I leave, he’ll—”

“He won’t do anything,” Technoblade said firmly. They were wasting time— If Tommy’s paranoia was to be believed, Dream could come back at any moment. Technoblade needed to move this interaction along. “Tommy, I promise you, you’ll be safe. But we need to leave *now*.”

Tommy took a tentative step backwards.

And— Oh.

Tommy wasn’t walking right. Technoblade just stared at Tommy’s hobbling limp for a moment before coming to a decision Tommy was sure to be unhappy with. But Technoblade had already spent too much time considering Tommy’s feelings and they didn’t have any more to waste.

“We need to move quickly,” he said, approaching Tommy faster than the kid could retreat. “I’m sorry, but we don’t have time to discuss this more.”

“No, no—” Tommy’s hands were up, his ears pinned back, as if expecting a hit.

But he didn’t get more than a half-step back before Technoblade was scooping him up into his arms. Tommy went wild, thrashing and hitting, but Technoblade caught both of his wrists with the hand encircling his back and subdued him easily.

“Tommy, just stay still and let me carry you,” Technoblade snapped, squeezing Tommy tighter to his chest. He began hauling him to where he’d left Carl tied.

“No.” Tommy hyperventilating, seizing in Technoblade’s arms. “Please, please, Dream will kill me if I leave, please just let me go—”

“I’m not letting Dream take you,” Technoblade ground out, but that only seemed to upset Tommy more. “You’re safe. I have you.”

“Let me go,” Tommy repeated hoarsely. “Please, please, Techno, I’ll do anything. Just let me go back to Dream.”

Gods, Technoblade wanted to be sick. “I can’t do that,” he said, forcing himself to inhale past his nausea.

“If I go with you—” Tommy’s throat seized before he could finish that sentence. He looked about as nauseous as Technoblade felt. Then his fight kicked up all over again.

“Dream!” Tommy shrieked, jerking frantically in Technoblade’s arms. His hoarse voice carried through the thin trees, even as Technoblade tried to wrestle him down. “Dream, *help!*”

Fuck. If Dream came upon them like this, Technoblade wasn't confident he could battle him *and* keep Tommy safe, and he wasn't willing to risk his little brother. He had no other choice. Before he could talk himself out of it, Technoblade pinned Tommy to his chest with one arm, dug through the pocket of his armor with the other, and withdrew a handkerchief. With Tommy's mouth open in a shout, it was easy to stuff the rag between his teeth and cut his scream off.

Tommy panicked all over again, but in the moment, Technoblade couldn't bring himself to care. Tommy was quiet and Tommy was with him. That was all that mattered.

"Shh," Technoblade said, clutching Tommy closer to his chest as he carried him to Carl. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Tommy was crying around the gag and Technoblade almost felt bad, but his guilt was quickly replaced with resolve when Tommy went almost limp in his arms.

He was still shuddering, but his violent, jerky movements had given way to full-body twitches. Technoblade would have been concerned that he was genuinely seizing if he couldn't see his teary eyes.

"I know," Technoblade murmured, hitching Tommy a little closer. "I know, kit. I'm sorry." He kept one hand wrapped around both of Tommy's wrists where his arm encircled him, but there was no need. Tommy wasn't fighting anymore. "I know you're scared. But you're safe now. I'm not going to let anything happen to you."

Tommy only cried harder.

Technoblade could see the glint of Carl's armor in the distance now. He went a little faster. Tommy's vocal cries had faded to hitching sobs, muffled behind the cloth in his mouth.

"I'm sorry," Technoblade repeated. He felt sick, but there wasn't time for that. He was a soldier. He would do what was necessary and he would deal with the consequences later.

Technoblade lifted Tommy up onto Carl first. Tommy at least had the wherewithal to curl his fingers around Carl's reins as Technoblade sat him up, though he still wobbled where he sat.

With his hand braced on Tommy's back, Technoblade said, "Tommy, I need you to stay right here."

Tommy's eyes darted to him, wide and anxious. Hoping he wouldn't regret it, Technoblade reached up to pull the handkerchief out of Tommy's mouth. He paused before he did, his brow arched. "Are you going to stay quiet?"

Tommy nodded tearfully.

As Technoblade pulled the cloth free from his mouth, Tommy inhaled a shaking, shuddering breath and asked, "Where are you going?"

"I need to do something. I'll be right back, I promise."

Tommy didn't look at all reassured.

Technoblade patted his hand where it clutched at Carl's reins. "Stay quiet. Look after Carl. I'll be right back."

Tommy nodded, though his ears were pinned back to hide in his curls. His tail curled around himself and he buried his fingers in his own fur, squeezing far too tight.

As Technoblade turned to leave, he heard Tommy whisper, like a mantra, "You wouldn't leave Carl."

Technoblade's heart clenched at that. *I wouldn't leave you either*, he wanted to say, but he knew they had a long way to go before Tommy believed that again.

Technoblade made his errand quick. He withdrew his flint and steel as he made his way back to the beach, scooping up dry grass on his way to use as kindling.

He took one last look at Logsteadshire. The tent. The beach. The scorch marks in the sand that matched the ones on Tommy's skin.

With a wicked, satisfied grin, Technoblade burned Logsteadshire to the ground.

He smelled of smoke when he returned. He half-hoped that was what made Tommy flinch, and not his presence as a whole.

Technoblade swung up behind Tommy and steadied him with an arm around his waist. Gently, he pried the reins from Tommy's fingers and took control.

With a whistle and a click, they were off. Like his strings had been cut, Tommy slumped back against Technoblade. As his head lolled, Technoblade caught his first glimpse of the nape of Tommy's neck and the smiley-face scorch mark that was etched into it.

Technoblade waited until they reached the portal before he slowed Carl to a stop, retreated a few yards from Tommy's dozing form, and threw up.

Then he straightened up, spat a wad of bile into the grass, and remounted Carl. For the rest of the ride, he clutched Tommy tight to his chest. His hand was spread across Tommy's sternum, both to keep the boy steady and to better feel the rise and fall of his too-thin chest beneath his fingers.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Nightmares, panic attack, mention of burn injuries, mention of past branding

Chapter Notes

Please let me know if I missed any warnings!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy slept the entire journey home. Technoblade would have been alarmed had he not remembered how, in the aftermath of stressful situations, Tommy had the tendency to crash. He'd once witnessed an eleven-year-old Tommy sleep a full twenty-four hours after breaking down over a sheep that had wandered away from the farm.

Still, Technoblade did his best to keep the ride smooth and Tommy tucked securely under his cloak. It would be annoying to deal with a grumpy kid if he woke up halfway home, Technoblade reasoned.

When they did finally arrive at his Arctic residence, Technoblade had little trouble easing Tommy off of Carl and carrying him to the house. Even in sleep, Tommy's body was tense and his tail remained curled tightly around his waist. Technoblade didn't want to think about why he would feel the need to protect his tail like that, and why he flinched unconsciously each time Technoblade so much as brushed it.

It was cold in the house— as expected after months of vacancy. He laid Tommy down on the couch and covered him with his cloak before crouching to start a fire in the hopes of heating the house quickly.

When there was a modest fire crackling in the hearth, he braced his hands on his knees and stood with a grunt.

As the fire's warmth flooded the room, Tommy began to stir. Technoblade took the opportunity for what it was.

“Hey,” he said softly, crouching near where Tommy lay on the couch. “Can you wake up for me, kit? Just for a few minutes.”

Tommy made a discontented noise and his ears flicked unhappily, but he cracked his eyes open anyway. He startled when he caught sight of Technoblade, but Technoblade's heavy hand on his shoulder soothed him long enough for Technoblade to issue a reminder.

"I have you. You're safe."

Tommy didn't look certain about either of those statements, but he didn't try to pull away again as Technoblade eased him upright. Though his eyes were hooded with suspicion, Tommy took the food Technoblade gave him and scarfed it down. More than once, Technoblade had to remind him to slow down, for fear that Tommy would make himself sick. He followed the food up with a regeneration potion, before slumping back down on the couch and pulling Technoblade's cloak tighter around him.

"Okay, kid," Technoblade said, patting his head gently. He regretted it when Tommy flinched hard enough to clack his teeth together. His ears had ducked back against his head to avoid Technoblade's hand.

Technoblade withdrew his hand. He tried not to sound phased, but the words still came out thick as he said, "Get some sleep, yeah?"

Tommy's voice was quiet, muffled in the heavy fabric of Technoblade's cloak, and it was only thanks to Technoblade's pointed ears that he caught Tommy's question. "What's gonna happen to me?"

Technoblade wished more than anything that he had the answer to that, but as always, the future's certainty slipped through his fingers.

So he said the only thing he could be certain of.

"I'm going to protect you. No one is going to hurt you again."

Tommy's whisper carried through the room like a ghost riding the wind. "I don't believe you."

Technoblade swallowed hard, fighting past the aching desire to sweep the kid into his arms and never let him go. As much as his instincts were screaming at him to take his kit and hide him away in his nest, the last thing he wanted to do was frighten Tommy more. So he restrained himself.

"That's okay, kit," he managed past the tightness in his throat. "You don't have to trust me. I'm gonna do it anyway."

The second time Tommy woke up, he woke up screaming.

Or, well, it was almost screaming. His throat was too shredded to make any noise beyond a wheeze, but his heart sure was in it.

Technoblade nearly dropped his bowl in his haste to reach Tommy from the kitchen.

Tommy was still screaming when Technoblade burst into the living room, thrashing on the couch beneath Technoblade's cloak. He was half-choking, gurgling on his own screams as he writhed on the couch.

"Tommy. Tommy!" Technoblade caught him by the shoulders, hoping to tug the boy from his nightmare with a physical sensation to ground him. But his grip on his shoulders did little to calm the kid down. In fact, it only seemed to make things worse.

"No!" Tommy shrieked hoarsely, shoving at Technoblade with weak hands. "Stop it! Let me go! Dream! *Dream!*"

Like he'd been burned, Technoblade dropped his hold on Tommy and stumbled back.

The worst part was, Technoblade didn't know if Tommy was screaming in fear of Dream or *calling* for him. Either one made Technoblade want to be sick.

"Breathe," Technoblade coached, though his voice was thin with stress. "Breathe, Tommy."

His words of encouragement had little impact. Tommy couldn't hear him past his own ragged cries.

Technoblade dropped to a crouch, his eyes locked on Tommy and his fingers curling into the hem of his own shirt to keep from reaching out.

This wasn't a problem he could fight with his fists. He couldn't solve this with brute force, or by throwing Tommy over his shoulder and carrying him bodily away from the problem.

He could only watch as his little brother wheezed and clawed at his throat until his body gave way to exhaustion.

After nearly a full six minutes of panicking—and six minutes of Technoblade's world falling out from under his feet—Tommy's eyes began to droop and he slumped sideways over the arm of the couch. Technoblade was pretty sure he was passing out from a lack of oxygen. He hated that he was relieved.

Once he was sure Tommy was fully out, Technoblade ventured close enough to adjust Tommy on the couch. He laid him back down and tucked his cape around him. He let his hands linger over Tommy's hair, but he didn't move to stroke it. He just sat on the floor beside his little brother, leaning back against the couch, listening to each of Tommy's breaths as they stuttered and stalled.

Tommy didn't wake again until morning. Technoblade didn't sleep a wink.

The next morning, Technoblade managed to coax Tommy into eating another small meal. He wasn't as eager about it this time, but he managed to stomach almost half of it before he looked away tearfully. Technoblade didn't force it. He was just happy Tommy managed to keep down as much as he did.

Then it was bathtime. Tommy was absolutely filthy, worse than Technoblade had ever seen him, even as a half-feral child on the farm with their family. He probably had *fleas*.

Unfortunately, Tommy disagreed.

“Get in the tub.”

“No.”

Though Technoblade was relieved to see even a glimpse of Tommy’s old self, he was tired of this conversation.

“Tommy, this isn’t up for discussion.” He was blocking the bathroom door with his body, a comb and scissors resting on the sink counter.

“I’m fine,” Tommy said stiffly. His eyes were darting, but Technoblade was blocking the only exit.

“You’re filthy,” Technoblade said, his voice tight with strained patience. “Your hair is matted, your tail is fucked, and I don’t even want to know the kinds of bugs you’ve got crawling on you. You. Need. A. Bath. This is non-negotiable.”

Tommy’s expression faltered, like he was on the verge of caving, before it solidified again.

“No,” he said, his chin held high even as his voice trembled.

Technoblade pinched his brow. This wasn’t like when Tommy was a kit and he could just toss him bodily into the bath, the toddler’s shrieks mixing with his giggles; Technoblade needed to be gentle here. Brute force would only serve to frighten Tommy more. Besides, Technoblade was pretty sure Tommy had had enough control exerted over him to last a lifetime.

But that didn’t negate the problem at hand: Tommy needed a bath, desperately.

“Can you tell me why?” Technoblade asked, trying his very best to be patient.

Tommy swallowed. His shoulders were hunched, curled in on himself like he was trying to protect a weakness. His next words solidified that theory:

Meekly, without looking at Technoblade, Tommy said, “It’ll hurt.”

It’ll hurt? Technoblade wracked his brain, trying to remember if Tommy had ever had some sort of aversion towards water, until he realized—

Right. Technoblade hadn’t treated Tommy’s burns yet— he’d been waiting until the kid was clean— and most of them were still open and unscabbed. Of course a hot bath would hurt.

Okay. Technoblade could work with that.

“It doesn’t have to be hot if you don’t want it to be,” he said. “As long as you scrub hard enough and use enough soap, a cool bath should be fine.”

Tommy blinked at him, surprised, before his eyes narrowed in suspicion. He lifted his chin slowly, like he wanted to test just how many boundaries Technoblade would let him set before he ran out of patience.

Now Technoblade wasn’t the most patient man in the world, but Tommy didn’t need to fear reaching the end of his rope. Right now, Technoblade was willing to let him have as many boundaries as he needed, just so long as he took a damn bath.

“And…” Tommy looked lost for a moment, like he didn’t even know what it was he wanted. Then he solidified. “And you’re not touching me.”

This time, Technoblade blinked. “All right,” he agreed easily. “I’d actually prefer it if you could do it yourself. You just have to be sure to properly take care of your fur.”

Tommy just stared at him, his eyes wild. Slowly, he repeated, “You won’t touch me?”

“That’s what I said.”

Tommy didn’t look at all like he believed him. Technoblade just moved on.

“I’m gonna knock and check on you every ten minutes.” He arched his brow. “And I’m checking your fur for fleas when you’re done.”

Tommy acquiesced with an unhappy nod.

“All right. Holler if you need anything.”

With that, Technoblade shut the door behind him. He spent nearly five minutes sitting on the floor just outside of the bathroom, waiting to hear the splash of Tommy climbing in. When he did, he knew Tommy had followed his instructions.

As Technoblade had promised, he knocked every ten minutes. And every ten minutes, he received a disgruntled noise that proved all he needed to know: that Tommy hadn’t drowned in the bathtub.

Finally, after a concerning amount of splashing, the door opened, revealing soaked floors and a marginally-cleaner boy.

There was work to be done still— Technoblade would love to properly comb out that tail— but for now, he was satisfied.

Now came the matter of Tommy’s burns.

Before Tommy could blink, Technoblade slid his hands beneath his arms and lifted him up onto the countertop. Tommy tensed at the movement, his ears pressing back and his teeth baring in a silent hiss, before once again going lax as Technoblade set him down.

“I’m gonna take care of your injuries now,” Technoblade said casually, trying to ignore the way Tommy’s tail was swishing anxiously. The kid caught it and pulled it into his lap, clutching at it with his dull claws. (And that was another thing: For how unkempt Tommy had been, his claws were trimmed and dull. Rendered useless. Technoblade didn’t want to think about why that might be. Or who might have insisted on such upkeep.)

Technoblade didn’t mention the brand he’d seen earlier on the back of Tommy’s neck. It had already scarred over, he knew, so there was little point in treating it now. Besides, it was clear Tommy didn’t want anyone seeing it. The kid’s shaggy, curling hair almost covered it completely and the hunch of his shoulders made up the difference, to the point that it was nearly undetectable if you didn’t know what you were looking for. Unfortunately, it just so happened that Technoblade knew.

So Technoblade focused on the scorch marks lining Tommy’s arms and legs, as well as the cut on his cheek. Cleaning was his top priority— who knew how long these injuries had been exposed to the filthy conditions of Logsteadshire— then bandaging.

“This is gonna burn a little,” Technoblade warned, lifting the antiseptic-dipped cotton cloth for Tommy to see.

Tommy just tightened his jaw, looking resolved. “I can take it.”

Tommy was rigid as Technoblade went about cleaning his still-open wounds, but Technoblade didn’t miss the way his bottom lip trembled, even after he sunk his teeth into it.

“Just a few more,” Technoblade murmured, dabbing again. Tommy hissed, his arm jerking in Technoblade’s grip. “Do you need a break?”

Tommy was pale as he took a deep, heaving breath and muttered, “No. No, Dream, I can take it.”

Technoblade’s blood went cold. The cloth nearly slipped from his fingers before he could think to put it down. His mouth was dry and it took too long before he was able to force out his next words.

“Tommy.”

Tommy was trembling, his eyes fixed on the far wall. Technoblade had to consciously remind himself to loosen his grip on the kid’s arm.

“I’m not Dream,” Technoblade said coldly. He wasn’t angry at Tommy, but he couldn’t hide the fury stirring in his gut.

“I know that,” Tommy ground out. “It— it was an accident. But it’s fine. You don’t have to stop. I can take it.”

Technoblade just stared at him. “It’s okay,” he said slowly. “You don’t have to *take it*.” He was starting to detest that phrase. “You’re allowed breaks if you want them.”

“It’s a punishment!” Tommy burst out, red-faced and frustrated. “You’re not supposed to make it easy! I’m not a pussy, okay? I can fucking take it!”

Technoblade felt vaguely like someone had jammed a knife into his stomach. His mind and his instincts were crawling over each other, fighting for dominance as they all shrieked the same words:

Punishment, punishment, kit, kit, kit, Dream punished our kit, our baby, ours, ours, ours!

“Tommy.” Technoblade’s voice was low and he hated the way Tommy went tense at the sound of it. “What— *exactly*— do you think you’re being punished for?”

Technoblade didn’t know how it was possible, but Tommy hunched in on himself even further.

His face was scrunched miserably as he said, “I was bad. I yelled at you. I didn’t listen.”

“You always yell at me,” Technoblade said slowly. “That doesn’t make you bad. And it certainly doesn’t mean you deserved to be hurt.”

Tommy said nothing. His jaw was tight as he stared at his knees, his fingers twisting his tail harshly. Technoblade ached to reach out and stop him, but for Tommy’s sake, he restrained himself.

“Listen to me very carefully.”

Tommy went still, save for his trembling.

“There is no world in which you deserve to be punished for feeling frightened.” Technoblade knew his tone was harsh, but he couldn’t help it. He was furious. If it weren’t for the kid shaking apart on his countertop, Technoblade would have stormed right out of the house to tear Dream apart.

Tommy still didn’t say anything. Technoblade missed his fierce passion, the way he’d never hesitated to voice his displeasure. This Tommy— subdued and submissive in the worst way — was a shell of his former self.

Tommy jerked his arm towards Technoblade, the pink burn marring his forearm only half-cleaned..

“Just finish it.” Tommy’s voice shook, but his chin was held high. He didn’t speak again, and Technoblade didn’t make him.

Though Tommy didn’t ask for them, Technoblade gave him breaks, keeping a careful eye on Tommy’s every flinch, until his wounds were clean and bound.

Tommy lowered himself gingerly from the counter, stiff against Technoblade’s offer of help. (It was a far cry from the way Tommy used to move— all wild limbs and spontaneity. Technoblade didn’t know he would miss it so much, even after being clocked in the face by Tommy’s swinging arms more than once.)

“Is there somewhere I can be alone?” Tommy didn’t quite look at him, but Technoblade was beginning to get used to that.

“The bed’s made up in Phil’s room upstairs,” Technoblade said. He didn’t miss Tommy’s flinch at their father’s name.

“I’m gonna go rest then. If it’s okay.” Tommy sounded hesitant, like he thought Technoblade would be upset at him even vaguely asserting himself.

“Sure,” Technoblade said, nodding towards the stairs. “Go on.”

Tommy didn’t answer. His unnerving silence lingered even after he disappeared up the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

I'm gonna try to write a bunch on Sunday, so if all goes well, I should get the next few chapters prepared to be posted in the next few days!

Please leave a comment if you're enjoying it, they make me write faster!! <333

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Referenced abuse/manipulation, referenced burn injuries, referenced past branding

Chapter Notes

Hope you enjoy this one! I wrote a lot for the upcoming chapters, so look for those in the near future!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Technoblade needed to think. So while Tommy rested upstairs, Technoblade rolled the past hour around his head and tried his hardest not to punch through one of his carefully-crafted windows.

The damage Dream had done to his brother was almost too much to bear. But if Tommy had to shoulder it, then Technoblade would too. He refused to let his little brother face anything alone again.

As he forced himself to consider just what Tommy had been through, a strange thud sounded from upstairs. Technoblade froze in his pacing, his ears pricking up in interest.

A shuffling noise came, then a scraping sound. Then, all at once, there was no sound at all. Not even Tommy's heartbeat.

Technoblade was on the move before he fully registered it, snagging a knife off the wall and dashing up the stairs. He threw open the bedroom door at the top of the stairs and was met with a rush of cold air.

He stalled in the sudden chill, scanning the room for Tommy. The first thing he clocked was the open window. The second was Tommy's absence.

The bed was untouched and the room was perfectly clean, like no one had been there at all. The only sign of Tommy's presence was the smeared handprint on the frosted windowpane where the window had been yanked open.

In two strides, Technoblade was across the room. He stuck his head out the window, his heart racing. The stamped indents in the snow two stories beneath painted a clear-enough picture,

and he looked up to find Tommy nearly forty yards from the house, struggling through the fallen snow.

“Shit,” Technoblade growled. He tore himself away from the window and rushed down the stairs, fear and fury mixing in some strange hurricane inside of him.

He only stopped long enough to throw on his boots. The snow was halfway up to his calf already, a typical beginning to an Arctic shower— to Tommy, it would be knee height, nearly impossible to wade through at the rate he needed.

Technoblade caught up to him easily. Tommy was hurt and he wasn’t dressed for the weather — he didn’t even have *shoes*, for gods’ sakes. He’d had little chance from the start. While Technoblade half-admired his tenacity, even if he had been able to get to the forest, Technoblade would have had no problem tracking him down. He was known as a bloodhound just as much as he was the Blood God.

He grabbed Tommy easily, catching him under the arms and yanking him up out of the snow.

“No!” Tommy screamed, thrashing in Technoblade’s grip. His feet dangled above the ground and Technoblade saw where they were turning an alarming shade of red from the cold. “No! I want to go back! I want Dream!”

“Stop it!” Technoblade shook him harshly.

“Fuck you!” Tommy shrieked. He sent a weak kick back, but it glanced uselessly off of Technoblade’s calf. “I hate you! I want Dream!”

Technoblade didn’t engage with that. He didn’t think he could without becoming too angry to safely handle the kid in his arms.

So he just held him firmly, Tommy’s bony back pressed to his chest, his thin body enveloped by Technoblade’s arms. Technoblade could feel each bump of Tommy’s spine through his too-thin clothes, where malnourishment had sharpened his bones against his skin.

But Tommy— stubborn, tenacious Tommy— was still twisting in his grip, all snarls and sharp teeth. His thin elbow caught Technoblade in the gut and it took all Technoblade had not to throw him bodily into the snow.

“Hey!” Technoblade shook him again, probably harsher than he should have, but if a good rattle of his teeth was what Tommy needed to calm down, then Technoblade was willing to make it happen. “*Hey!* Calm the fuck down!”

Abruptly, in the most alarming move of this entire horror show, Tommy went boneless. Limp. Like he was prey, accepting his fate in the jaws of his predator.

Still, even as he relented, Tommy repeated, over and over again, tearful and frightened: “Fuck you. Fuck you. I fucking hate you.”

Technoblade forced his voice to soften before he spoke again. “It’s okay,” he said slowly, enunciating each sound into Tommy’s quivering ears. He could feel the kid shaking against

him, but it wasn't from the cold. "You're safe."

"Please," Tommy begged brokenly. But despite his pleas, he was compliant as Technoblade hefted him up over his shoulder. "Please, I want Dream."

"You're okay," Technoblade repeated through gritted teeth, even though all he wanted to do was shake Tommy over and over again, until he shook him loose from whatever hold Dream had on him. But he couldn't. Because that would scare Tommy. And Technoblade wasn't Dream. He refused to make his brother comply through fear.

Though, a voice in the back of his mind pointed out, *haven't you already done that? Isn't that what you just did now?* Technoblade ignored it in favor of hauling Tommy back to the house.

The moment Technoblade set him down inside, Tommy's nearly-frostbitten feet gave out beneath him. Technoblade only barely managed to catch him under the arms before he went tumbling to the ground. He hauled him up again with a muttered apology. Though Tommy was resistant to his help, he didn't have much choice in the matter as Technoblade dragged him to the couch.

Tommy's feet were red and swollen from the snow and his toes were tinged blue. It wasn't as bad as it could have been, but he wasn't going to be walking on them at least until he got them warmed up.

"Sit," Technoblade said sternly. He knew he was being harsh right now, but he couldn't help it. He was frustrated. "I'm getting a warm washcloth for your feet. If you move an inch, you lose the right to sit by yourself. I'm gonna start carrying you with me everywhere to make sure you don't run off."

Tommy just crossed his arms and glared at the floor.

Fortunately, Tommy seemed to know better than to test him right now because he was still on the couch when Technoblade returned. He took the wet washcloth without complaint and began warming up his feet with silent winces of pain.

Ignoring Tommy's stiffness at his approach, Technoblade sat on the coffee table directly in front of him.

"That was the stupidest thing you've ever done," he said flatly.

"Fuck you," Tommy snapped, shooting him a glare.

Technoblade just nodded, leaning back on his hands and meeting Tommy's glare head-on. Tommy's mouth twitched, but he didn't falter in his tight expression.

"All right. If that's how you wanna talk, that's how we'll talk." Technoblade arched his brow. "Tell me why the fuck you want to go back to Dream."

Tommy flinched, but jerked his chin up higher in defiance. "Dream's my friend," he said staunchly.

“Right,” Technoblade sneered. “Because friends *punish* you.”

“Fuck you!” Tommy snarled, his teeth bared. He shifted on the couch, pulling his legs up and scooching away to get some distance from Technoblade. “You don’t understand!”

“You’re right,” Technoblade agreed sharply. “I don’t understand. Dream *hurts* you.”

“*You* hurt me!”

Technoblade blinked. Straightened. “Explain.” His voice was cold.

“You left!” Tommy said fiercely. “You left me alone!”

“Tommy.” Technoblade didn’t finish that sentence. He didn’t need reminding of that particular failure. He never should have left and that mistake would haunt him for the rest of his life, as it well should. Because the consequences would haunt Tommy for no less.

“Dream said you didn’t want me anymore!” Tommy was red-faced, but it wasn’t from the cold anymore, and his hands were curled into half-fists in his lap. Technoblade was pretty sure that was the best he could do; with the burns circling his hands, he didn’t seem to be able to close his fists any further. “He said you didn’t care! That if you came back, it would only be to hurt me!”

“Dream lied to you,” Technoblade ground out.

“He loves me!”

“No, he doesn’t!” Despite his desire to handle Tommy gently, Technoblade was losing patience. “He hurt you!”

Tommy’s tail was thumping angrily on the couch. “He was trying to help me!”

“You think someone who loves you would fucking *brand* you?”

Technoblade almost regretted the words as he watched Tommy’s face fall, but he forced himself to remain steadfast.

Unconsciously, Tommy leaned back. His hand fluttered up to the back of his neck, where the smiley-face burn was etched into his skin like the world’s most sickening tattoo. “That’s not — It’s not what you think.” He looked nauseous. “He said— it’s to keep me safe.”

“How?” Technoblade demanded. “How does burning his fucking mark into you keep you *safe*?”

“So people would know.” Tommy’s chin was raised, but he was sounding less and less certain with every word. “That I belonged to him. They wouldn’t hurt me if— if they knew I was Dream’s.”

Technoblade’s stomach dropped out from under him. His voice was low, all cold fury and ferocity.

“Dream does not own you.” He enunciated every word to its fullest potential, both to make sure Tommy understood and to hear the words out loud for himself.

“I... I know that.” Tommy didn’t look convinced. His tail was still thrashing against the couch cushion, but its angry movements had shifted to something more uncertain. “But...” He looked up and the teary shine of his eyes was like a knife to Technoblade’s heart. “Wouldn’t it be easier if he did?”

Technoblade couldn’t keep the ice out of his tone as he asked, “Easier for who?”

Tommy gave a little shrug. His feet were no longer so dangerously cold, but Technoblade still reached to cover them with the blanket hanging over the back of the couch. Tommy shrank back as Technoblade leaned forward to grab it. He stared, wide-eyed, as Technoblade just tucked the blanket around his feet and retreated from his space.

“Answer me,” Technoblade said firmly. “Do you want to go back?” It was cruel, he knew, but he needed to understand. He needed *Tommy* to understand. “Do you want to go back to that beach, where your so-called friend entertains himself by hurting you?”

“I— I—” Tommy’s eyes were brimming with tears. “I don’t know.”

He looked confused in the worst way. Dream had done something— had tied some string to Tommy’s mind and twisted it— just like he’d tried to do with Wilbur. Technoblade was going to kill him for it. Just as soon as he got his little brother back.

“Tommy.” Technoblade’s voice was low, but it wasn’t harsh like before. Instead, it was soft. Insistent. “Your family cares about you. We made a mistake in leaving you. *I*... made a mistake.” He solidified, letting that guilt harden into a shield. When he spoke again, his words were an oath. “I’m not going to leave you again.”

Tommy said nothing. He wouldn’t quite look at Technoblade. Technoblade tried not to mind.

“I’m going to ask you again: Do you still want to go back to Dream?”

Tommy was pale. “I... I don’t know.”

“Why not?” Technoblade asked, more patiently than he really felt.

Tommy swallowed, his throat bobbing visibly. “Because... if he finds me... if he finds out I didn’t fight... I didn’t try to get back to him... he...” Tommy’s eyes were unfocused, staring at the bandages covering his burn-scarred hands. “I don’t know what he’ll do.”

Understanding settled like a block of ice in Technoblade’s chest and he half-wished he’d never asked at all. But he would face this. If Tommy had to, so would he.

Tommy seemed to take his silence as an expression of disapproval.

“I’m sorry,” he said, and finally, tears spilled down his flushed cheeks. “Techno, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to run.”

“Yes, you did,” Technoblade said impassively. Tommy flinched and shut his mouth. Technoblade sighed. “I’m not mad, kid. I just don’t want you to do it again. You... you scared me.”

Tommy’s gaze dropped to where his hands were twisting in his lap. “I’m sorry,” he whispered. He was picking at one of the bandages on the back of his hand and Technoblade reached to stop him.

“I’m not mad.” Technoblade thought it bore repeating; unfortunately, Tommy didn’t seem to believe it any more the second time.

Technoblade lowered his head to try and catch Tommy’s eyes, but the boy just looked away. His jaw was still tight with fear, his bitten lips undergoing another round of abuse in the form of his anxious gnawing.

“Can you look at me?”

Tommy looked up. His blue eyes were teary and half-hidden beneath his drooping lids, but as he met Technoblade’s gaze, something in them relaxed.

“I’m not angry with you, Tommy. I was scared because I thought you were going to get hurt. That’s why I reacted the way I did. Do you understand?”

Tommy nodded, his lips tight.

“You’re safe here,” Technoblade said. “Dream will not get to you.” He gave Tommy a little smile, his crooked lips lifting to reveal the length of his tusks. “Come on, kid. You *know* me. Do you really think there’s anything from the Nether to the End that could keep me from protecting you?”

Tommy sniffed and shook his head.

“I left,” Technoblade continued. “That was a mistake.” He met Tommy’s gaze head on, catching the younger boy’s cheek in his hand to keep him from squirming away from the eye contact. “It’s not one I’m going to make again. Got it?”

Tommy nodded, squeezing his eyes shut as a tear slipped from the corner of his eye. It landed on Technoblade’s hand. Technoblade just thumbed at his cheek before he let him go.

“Can you promise me something?”

Tommy still didn’t say anything, but Technoblade pushed through.

“I need you to promise you won’t try to run again. I need you here with me, Toms. How am I meant to protect you if you’re trying to get away from me?”

Tommy swallowed hard. “Okay,” he whispered hoarsely. “I... promise.”

Technoblade wanted to believe him. Gods, he wanted *so badly* to believe him. But as he reached to settle his cape around Tommy’s shoulders, he knew he wouldn’t be letting Tommy

out of his sight for the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Please leave a comment if you liked it! They motivate me to write faster! Thank you for all of your support so far <333

The next few chapters should be up in the next couple of days and chapter four will have some FLUFF :)

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

THE PROMISED FLUFF!!!!

(Mostly)

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Illness, brief mentions of malnutrition, panic/nightmares, referenced emotional manipulation

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Given the combined contribution of Tommy's intense stress and his reckless, underdressed venture out into the Arctic, it came as little surprise to Technoblade when Tommy woke up the next morning absolutely burning with fever.

Technoblade had slept on the floor of Tommy's room that night— not quite convinced the kid wouldn't make another escape attempt— and he was glad he did so when, at nearly four in the morning, he woke to Tommy thrashing in a fevered haze.

He was twisting under the sheets uncomfortably, both sweating and shivering as he fought with the blankets that held him down.

"Hey, hey, settle down." Technoblade sat on the edge of the bed, catching Tommy's clammy cheek in his hand and thumbing at it soothingly. Tommy turned into the touch, his mouth falling open in a quiet whimper. His eyes were closed in sleep, but Technoblade could see where they darted beneath his lids, his lashes fluttering.

Technoblade slid his hand up to smooth Tommy's hair away from his sweat-slicked forehead. His ears twitched as Technoblade's fingers brushed them and Tommy let out a little huff of contentment, even as the fever wracked his body. Technoblade spent a few minutes just giving him comfort, petting at his fuzzy ears and wiping away the tears that fell occasionally from his closed eyes. He wished Tommy would purr— he'd yet to hear a single one fall from his lips since he'd found him— but he supposed the illness was making him too uncomfortable to relax fully. Once he was better, he was sure to be back to purring like he had when he was a kit.

The whine Tommy gave when Technoblade pulled his hand away left an ache in Technoblade's chest, but he knew he had to get something to help with this fever.

"Sorry, bud," he said quietly, catching Tommy's hand where he reached blindly for him and placing it back on the bed. He gave it a little pat before he stood. "I'll be right back."

True to Technoblade's word, he was back in no time with the necessary supplies to care for a sick kit.

Technoblade sat beside Tommy on the bed and eased him into a sitting position, leaning against Technoblade's side. Technoblade lifted the uncorked potion bottle to Tommy's lips, but Tommy turned away with an unhappy sound and pressed his face into Technoblade's shirt instead.

"I know, I know," Technoblade said, rubbing Tommy's back soothingly. "But you need to take it. It's just a regen potion, I promise."

Tommy made a disgruntled noise, but he allowed Technoblade to pry him gently away and tip the potion into Tommy's mouth. He let Tommy sip it a little at a time, hoping that the easy dosage would keep it from upsetting Tommy's empty stomach. To further that endeavor along, he made Tommy drink at least half a glass of water before he let him lay back down.

Tommy was whining by then, glaring up at Technoblade with glassy eyes, but Technoblade managed to soothe him with some more stroking of his silky ears.

"Sleep," Technoblade said quietly, easing Tommy to lay back down.

Tommy turned his head to press his cheek against the outside of Technoblade's thigh and Technoblade could feel his breaths slow against his sleep pants as Tommy slipped back into a doze. His bony chest was rising and falling with little rattling sounds, a reminder of the meal plan Technoblade was going to have to come up with to get the kid back on track nutritionally.

Technoblade settled himself more firmly on the bed, leaning back up against the headboard as Tommy nuzzled closer to him. He let his hand fall to rest on Tommy's curls, carding through them with gentle movements.

Technoblade wasn't going back to sleep tonight.

"Techno, Techno, please—" Tommy's pleas were cut off by a harsh fit of coughing. For what seemed like the hundredth time in the last few hours, Technoblade forced him onto his side as he choked.

It was midday now. Tommy's fever had only risen since that morning and he'd developed a nasty cough that kept him from fully resting the way he needed to.

Technoblade was at his wit's end. If the fever grew any higher, Technoblade knew he would have to resort to more drastic measures than the regeneration potions and wet washcloth he

was currently working with. He remembered one winter when a then-teenaged Wilbur had caught a terrible cough not even potions could cure. When his fever had grown dangerously high, Phil had had no choice but to give him a cold bath. But in his fevered haze, Wilbur had fought him, and in the end, it had taken Phil and Technoblade's combined efforts to force him into the bath to cool him down. The memories of Wilbur's choked sobs and burning skin stuck with Technoblade for much longer than he wished they had; he still got tense when Wilbur so much as sniffled. So suffice it to say, Technoblade was hoping he wouldn't need to resort to such measures with yet another brother.

Finally, Tommy stopped coughing and once Technoblade heard a decently clear rattle of breath, he let him turn onto his back again.

"Please, Techno." Tommy's voice came out in a whimper. "Please, I'm scared." His eyes were wide and glassy, blinking sluggishly as he begged, "Don't leave. Please don't leave me alone."

Technoblade's breath stuttered in his throat. He had to swallow hard before he was able to force out his vow: "I'm not leaving," he said, his voice trembling. "I'm not going anywhere. I swear it."

He pressed the towel to Tommy's head again, stroking back his hair as Tommy writhed beneath his touch.

"Please, please, don't leave, I'm *scared*. Techno, I'm scared!"

Technoblade couldn't bear it anymore. So he made up his mind, sitting down on the bed and pulling Tommy bodily into his lap. Tommy went willingly, curling up against Technoblade's chest with a frightened whine. Technoblade stroked his ears and let his chest vibrate in a reassuring purr. He hoped the familiarity of the sensation— used to soothe distressed piglets and toddler-Tommys so many years ago— would settle him down a bit. Sure enough, Tommy's ears pricked up at the sensation, turning to find the source of the noise. He didn't purr back, the way he used to when he was a kit, but he nuzzled his face further into Technoblade's chest. Technoblade held him close, his lips planted on Tommy's clammy forehead, both to soothe himself and to monitor Tommy's fever.

Finally, Tommy slept.

"I can work."

"No." Technoblade kept his hand pressed to Tommy's chest, pinning him easily to the bed. "You're staying right here."

They'd been having this argument all afternoon, since Tommy's fever had lowered enough to allow him to once again recognize his surroundings.

"Please," Tommy begged. "I can be useful. Let me do something."

“You don’t need to be useful,” Technoblade said, as patiently as he could manage after repeating this phrase nearly a dozen times over. “You need to rest.”

“I don’t wanna be lazy.”

“You’re not being lazy,” Technoblade said firmly. He wanted to be angry about the conditioning Tommy had clearly undergone to ingrain this belief so solidly in his head, but Tommy didn’t need his anger right now. So Technoblade stayed focused. “I don’t care what anyone else told you. You’re not lazy— You’re sick and you need to let your body recover.”

They’d been going in circles about this for too long. Tommy was wearing himself out just by arguing, but he wouldn’t let himself relax. Technoblade planned to fix that.

He ducked out of the bedroom— it had once been Phil’s, but now Technoblade was happy to designate it as Tommy’s— to grab another regeneration potion. When he returned, Tommy was halfway out of bed.

“Tommy!”

Tommy startled, his eyes wide as his head snapped to Technoblade.

Technoblade forced himself to soften his voice as he approached with his hands up. He didn’t know how disoriented Tommy was and he didn’t want to risk frightening him more.

“Tommy, please get back in bed.”

“But—”

“No arguments. You’re sick— You rest. That’s the rule.”

Tommy still didn’t look certain, but he let Technoblade manhandle him back into bed. Before he laid down fully, Technoblade uncorked the potion.

“Drink this,” he said, lifting the bottle to Tommy’s lips and holding it there even after Tommy closed his shaky hands around it. “It’ll help you sleep.”

Tommy sipped at the potion obediently, until Technoblade pulled the now-empty bottle away and helped him lay back down.

“You promise?” Tommy’s eyes were wide and his ears were quivering as he stared up at Technoblade. “You promise I’m not being lazy?”

Technoblade let out a soft sigh and lowered himself to a crouch beside Tommy’s bed. He pushed a gentle hand through Tommy’s curls, letting his fingers linger on his ears and allowing himself a soft smile at the way Tommy pushed up into the touch. “I promise,” he said softly. He let his hand slide from Tommy’s head to cup his flushed cheek. “The most helpful thing you can do right now is get some rest. I don’t want you to do anything else. ‘Kay?”

Tommy sniffed a little and nodded. “Kay.”

“Good.” Technoblade patted his cheek and stood from his crouch. As Tommy's eyes darted to follow him, he reassured the anxious kit: “I’m not going anywhere for long. Just gonna put this bottle in the sink.”

Tommy nodded and let his eyes slip closed.

By the time Technoblade returned, he was asleep, his mouth hanging open and a spot of drool on the pillow. Technoblade huffed out a quiet laugh and tucked the blankets a little tighter around him.

Somewhere between the regeneration potion and several of Technoblade’s stern reminders, Tommy had lost his persistent desire to be useful.

Technoblade was relieved, but he wasn’t relaxed either. Because what unnerved him now was Tommy’s silence.

After nearly three days of it, Tommy had finally gotten over the worst of the fever. So now he was left dealing with the tailend of his illness. Technoblade knew he had to be uncomfortable, likely aching and sore, but he didn’t utter a word in complaint unless Technoblade asked him directly. Even then, he was vague, emphasizing that he was “doing better, seriously. It’s not that bad,” even as he visibly winced each time he was forced to move.

Tommy was a complainer. That wasn’t an insult— okay, maybe it had been, back when Technoblade was a teenager and Tommy, a little kid— but it wasn’t anymore. It was just who Tommy was. It was almost a comfort to know that if something was wrong, Tommy wouldn’t hesitate to speak up.

Technoblade supposed that wasn’t quite true anymore.

With barely-contained anger burning in his chest, he wondered if Tommy’s complaining had served as an annoyance to Dream. If that was something the man had punished out of him.

He couldn’t bring it up though. As much as he knew the younger boy would hate the description, Technoblade couldn’t deny that Tommy was fragile right now. It showed itself in the way Tommy kept close to him, his eyes always searching when Technoblade stepped out of the room for even a moment.

Tommy’s silence could be dealt with later. Right now, all Technoblade cared about was healing Tommy fully, so he didn’t have to suffer in silence for any longer.

Something about Tommy shifted after he recovered from his illness. At first, Technoblade couldn’t quite put his finger on it, but as Tommy’s eyes cleared of their fevered haze, he realized:

Despite making a full recovery, Tommy had yet to abandon the clinginess his illness had prompted from him.

Contrary to his first few days in Technoblade's care, Tommy wasn't itching to get away from him. In fact, it seemed the opposite was now true.

At all times, Tommy needed to be attached to him, one way or another. Whether he was pressed to Technoblade's side in the living room or the kitchen, or gripping the fabric of his cloak as they moved through the house together, Tommy had become Technoblade's little shadow.

And Technoblade... didn't hate it.

Technoblade knew that the moment he acknowledged this shift, Tommy would become self-conscious and retreat back to his prior withdrawn state. That was the last thing Technoblade wanted. If contact was something Tommy needed, he would provide it. Plain and simple.

So he avoided acknowledging it out loud, unwilling to break the delicate balance they held in this unspoken agreement.

But right now, it was making things a bit difficult.

"I have to take care of the animals," Technoblade said, trying to shuffle away as Tommy clung to him.

"Take me with you," Tommy begged, moving to stand on Technoblade's feet. Technoblade could have easily lifted him up by the scruff and tossed him onto the couch, but just as much as Tommy didn't want to release him, Technoblade wasn't much inclined to let the kit go himself.

"You just got over a nasty fever," Technoblade said, knocking his knuckles lightly against Tommy's forehead in reminder.

"And now I'm over it," Tommy pointed out. "Please," he said, and wasn't *that* still strange to hear. Tommy with even a vague sense of manners. Technoblade was still getting used to it. "I've been wanting to see the animals anyway. What do you have?"

Technoblade was starting to realize that there was no way he was stepping foot outside of this house without Tommy.

He sighed. "If I take you with me, will you let go of me long enough for me to make dinner later?"

"Yes," Tommy said immediately, and even though Technoblade knew it was a lie, he found he didn't really care.

"All right. Let me find some boots for you."

Tommy released him long enough to let him dig an old pair of Wilbur's boots out from one of the storage chests.

"Here," Technoblade said, tossing the boots to Tommy. "Those should work for now, at least until I can craft you some new ones."

Tommy's eyes went wide. "I get my own?"

Technoblade blinked. "Of course. We can't have you wandering around in Wilbur's shitty boots for the rest of your life."

With poorly-veiled delight, Tommy sat to lace up the boots.

"It's windy out," Technoblade said, reaching to pull up the hood of Tommy's cloak. It was a deep blue, one of Phil's from years ago that Technoblade had altered to fit Tommy. "Your ears will freeze."

Tommy scrunched up his nose at the feeling of the hood pressing down on his ears, but he acquiesced without complaint.

As Technoblade went about his usual farm chores, his shadow didn't stray far from him. Every so often, he would give Tommy a task, like carrying a bucket or fetching some feed, but for the most part, Tommy stayed right by his side and admired the animals.

Tommy was especially enamored with the cows and the chickens. Technoblade would have to consider giving him some small responsibilities around the farm. Having something to take care of—especially a beloved animal—might help in his healing process, Technoblade supposed. It was what Phil had done with him when he was a broody teenager and, as it turned out, Carl had changed his life. Maybe Tommy could benefit the same way he had if he was given responsibility for one of the hens or a dairy cow.

Once the chores were done, Technoblade led them back inside. Tommy shook out his ears, his tail fluffing up as it too was freed from the cloak. Then his eyes and nose scrunched up and he let out a loud yawn.

Technoblade chuckled. "Gettin' tired?"

Tommy glared at him, but it was heatless.

"Come on," Technoblade said, pushing him towards the couch. "I'll make us some tea. I want a break too."

Tommy didn't argue and by the time Technoblade had returned with their steaming mugs, he was curled up on the couch, his face poking over the back of it to watch as Technoblade came in. The moment Technoblade sat down, he was treated to what might as well have been a heating pack pressed to his side. He adjusted to allow Tommy to lean more fully against him, his hand in Tommy's hair as he balanced a book in his other hand.

As Technoblade stroked a particularly sensitive spot on Tommy's triangular ears, Tommy let out a strange, stifled noise. As if to hide it, Tommy shifted and turned to press his nose against Technoblade's shoulder.

Was that... supposed to be a purr? It sounded painful. Maybe Technoblade had nicked a sore spot on Tommy's scalp, he reasoned, hoping beyond hope that Tommy wasn't doing what he

thought he was. Technoblade knew how painful it could be to suppress your instincts, especially one as innate as purring.

“Sorry,” Technoblade murmured, trying to sound casual. “Am I hurting you?”

Tommy shook his head and pressed his nose tighter to Technoblade’s shoulder.

“Good.” But as Technoblade stroked behind his ear, that same noise gurgled out of Tommy’s throat, despite his obvious attempts to hide it.

Okay, maybe this was something Technoblade needed to address.

He took a deep breath and just went for it. “Tommy, you know you can purr, right?”

Tommy went rigid. He didn’t pull away from Technoblade, but his ears retracted instinctually, pressing down into his hair as if to hide.

“I know,” Tommy snapped uncomfortably.

Technoblade wasn’t satisfied. “I just mean, you’re allowed,” he pressed. “It’s part of your instincts. It’s good for you.”

Tommy sat up then and his red face caught Technoblade by surprise. “Stop it,” he said, his jaw tight with something akin to anger.

Technoblade’s brow crinkled in confusion. “Stop what?”

“You—” Tommy let out a frustrated breath. “You’re confusing me.”

“How?” Technoblade asked simply. “I’m not saying anything that isn’t true. You’re allowed to purr.” He was a little firmer this time, but that only seemed to upset Tommy more.

“No!” Tommy insisted, red-faced as he pulled back further. “I’m— I’m not *supposed to*.”

“Who told you that?” Technoblade demanded flatly, his face twisting in disgust. “Dream?”

Tommy flinched visibly at the name, but Technoblade didn’t have it in him to feel guilty about it. Especially not after Tommy’s next words:

“He was helping me,” Tommy said staunchly. His voice was trembling. “He was teaching me to act more human!”

At that, Technoblade recoiled. “*Sorry?*”

“I’m—” Tommy’s hands came up to clutch at his own arms, his dull claws digging uselessly into his pale skin. “I’m an animal— I’m dirty. Dream was helping me be better.”

Technoblade was distantly grateful he’d set down his mug; he knew if he hadn’t, it would be in a million pieces right about now.

Even so, he had to take several deep breaths before he could even begin to think about responding. When he did, he spoke carefully.

“Do you remember what we talked about after you tried to go back to Dream?”

Tommy flinched at the reminder of his mistake, but nodded.

“What did I say?”

Tommy swallowed hard. His voice came out in a hoarse whisper. “That Dream lied.”

“About?”

“Everything.” Tommy looked miserable. Technoblade hated to have to put him through this conversation, but he needed to hear from Tommy’s own lips that he understood.

“Right,” Technoblade said firmly. “Everything. That includes any bullshit he spat about your hybrid features.”

Tommy didn’t look convinced.

Technoblade was going to have to bring out the big guns.

“*I’m* a hybrid,” he pointed out. “Is it wrong for me to listen to my instincts?”

“Well, no, but—” Tommy looked conflicted, squirming in place. “I don’t know,” he burst out finally. “It’s different!” He flushed a hot red, looking away. “I’m... I’m... *dirtier*, aren’t I?”

Technoblade went still. His brow was arched, his expression dangerously still. “What?”

Tommy still wouldn’t look at him. “It’s just... No one likes raccoons.”

Technoblade blinked, and before he could think better of it, the words had already slipped out of his mouth. “That’s bullshit.”

Tommy’s eyes flew up, startled.

“*I* like raccoons,” Technoblade said. “So does Phil. And Wilbur and everyone else whose opinion matters.”

Tommy’s mouth pulled thin, like he still wasn’t quite sure.

“I think *Dream* just doesn’t like raccoons,” Technoblade said with distaste. “That doesn’t make him an authority on hybrids or on you. It just makes him an asshole.”

Tommy exhaled a shaky little laugh and leaned against Technoblade’s shoulder again.

“It’s not good for you to suppress your instincts,” Technoblade reminded him quietly. “I know you’ve gotten into a habit of it, but I’d like to break that habit if we can. What do you think?”

It wasn't really up for debate, but Technoblade was trying to take a page out of Phil's parenting book— giving some semblance of control. (And gods, he really was parenting here, huh? It was humiliating. He was the *Blood God*, for End's sake. Fortunately, it was only him and Tommy here to witness his debasement.)

Tommy nodded. "I'll try," he said softly.

Technoblade was pretty sure Tommy didn't want to talk about it anymore, so he let the matter go for now. He opened his book again and settled his free hand back in Tommy's hair.

A few minutes later, a hesitant, broken purr vibrated through Tommy's throat.

Technoblade didn't say anything, but he did increase his ministrations, threading his fingers through Tommy's hair and fiddling lightly with his ears. Tommy purred again louder at the touch and though it was muffled against Technoblade's arm, it already sounded stronger than it had before.

Technoblade let out a rumbling purr in response and the one he received back had him fighting back a grin. Not lifting his eyes from his book, he ducked to press his lips to Tommy's ruffled hair.

Chapter End Notes

I hoped you liked this one! Please leave a comment, they are my only source of serotonin anymore lol /j

See you next time! <3

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Nightmares, dissociation, panic, mild blood/injuries, referenced abuse

Chapter Notes

Note: There is a brief switch to Tommy's POV in this chapter. It comes at a moment of fear and dissociation and I don't want anyone to be confused when it shows up! Future chapters will feature Tommy's POV as well, so this isn't a one-off thing.

Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“The chicks are going to hatch soon,” Technoblade said. Tommy was already holding his gloved hand, so Technoblade drew him over to where Henrietta was sitting comfortably on her nest and crouched beside it. Tommy lowered himself next to him and watched as Technoblade soothed the hen with gentle strokes before lifting her carefully off of her nest to count the eggs. Technoblade gave a little smile, setting Henrietta down with a pat and a handful of seeds.

“Twelve eggs,” he said, glancing at Tommy. Tommy’s eyes were wide as he leaned forward with interest. “Hopefully twelve chicks too.”

“How long has she been sitting on them?” Tommy asked, an air of reverence in his voice.

“She laid the eggs almost three weeks ago. Chicks usually hatch around the end of the third week, so we should wake up to a barnful of them any day now.”

Tommy exhaled an amazed little laugh, still staring at Henrietta on the nest. “That’s so cool.” He looked up at Technoblade with eyes brighter than Technoblade had seen in a long time. “You’re gonna have baby chickens!”

“*We’re* gonna have baby chickens,” Technoblade reminded him, nudging him gently.

Tommy’s lips curled, like he was trying to suppress a smile but failing.

Technoblade was pretty sure he’d just found Tommy’s new responsibility. A therapy hen and her twelve kids, he mused. For Tommy, it was a perfect fit.

It had been just over two weeks since Tommy's arrival at the farm and considering the circumstances, Technoblade was pretty happy with his progress. He was still clingy, but not overly so in a way that prompted concern.

He ate three square meals a day with snacks in between, and that healthy flush that once shone on his cheeks was steadily returning. His jaw and cheekbones were still sharp from malnutrition, but Technoblade wasn't worried. It would take time for Tommy's body to adjust to his new diet and as far as Technoblade was concerned, they had all the time in the world.

Nightmares remained an issue, though thankfully none had been as bad as the fever-induced ones he'd had to endure during his illness. For the first few days following his illness, Technoblade slept on the floor of Tommy's bedroom, and a few times a night, he would wake to his little brother's nightmares. Sometimes it took up to an hour to soothe him back to sleep, but Technoblade didn't mind. Now, however, Technoblade was sleeping in his own bed and, in what was a new move, Tommy had begun coming to him when he needed comfort.

So it was hardly unusual when late in the night, Technoblade woke to a dip in his mattress.

Hardly open cracking his eyes, he rolled over and lifted his arm. A second later, a trembling bundle burrowed itself against his chest.

"Hey, Toms," Technoblade murmured, shifting to better nuzzle Tommy's head. Tommy gasped back a shuddering sob and Technoblade could feel tears leaking into his shirt. He didn't care. He only held Tommy closer. "Hey, hey. You're okay. You're safe."

"I'm safe," Tommy repeated, breathless and muffled. His body was a live wire in Technoblade's arms, trembling like he might shake apart at any second.

"You're safe," Technoblade agreed. "I have you."

"Don't leave." Tommy pulled back just enough to look up at Technoblade. Even in the dark, Technoblade could see streaming down his face as he gasped around his plea. "Don't leave me alone. I can't—" His face crumpled and he buried his face back in Technoblade's chest. "I can't do it again."

"I won't." Technoblade wanted to cry too. He held Tommy tighter, both arms wrapped around Tommy's too-thin frame. "I won't. I'm sorry I did before. I shouldn't have."

Tommy exhaled a shuddering breath. Technoblade could feel his dull claws where they scrunched in his shirt, holding on for dear life.

"I have you," Technoblade exhaled. He pressed his lips tight to Tommy's curls and let himself be comforted by the beat of Tommy's heart against his chest. "I'm not going anywhere."

When Technoblade woke the next morning, Tommy hadn't moved an inch. He was still bundled in Technoblade's arms, his low, unsteady breaths puffing warm against the skin of Technoblade's neck.

They didn't need to get up yet, Technoblade decided. He curled a little tighter around Tommy, like he was a teenager again and Tommy was just a kit, whole and unbetrayed by the world, when the worst of his nightmares consisted of nothing more than the thundering storms outside.

They were in the kitchen. They were in the kitchen, which meant they were in the house, which meant they should have been safe. Technoblade was making bread, forming the dough in his largest bowl while Tommy pretended to be helpful, sipping at his water and making every bread joke known to man.

"No one's *dough*-ing it like you, Technoblade!"

Flatly, Technoblade responded, "Keep it up and you're gonna be toast."

Tommy cackled. "That was better than mine!"

Technoblade rolled his eyes, but he couldn't fight the smile that curled up the left side of his mouth. He hid it instead, leaning a little more over his bowl in mock-concentration as he combined the eggs and flour.

He was going to need more flour here before he started kneading the dough, he realized. He glanced at Tommy, that stubborn smile still curled on his lips.

"Hey, darlin', can you grab the—"

Glass exploded across the kitchen floor. Tommy's eyes went blank.

Darling, darling, darling.

Tommy's vision flickered gray. He couldn't feel his fingers, or his toes, or anything really.

Darling, darling, darling.

His heart was in his throat. He was pretty sure it had stopped beating entirely.

He'd dropped his water glass— shards of it were scattered across the floor beneath him and when he looked down, he saw red dotting the tops of his bare feet. He couldn't feel it, but he knew he'd been cut.

He should have put socks on, he thought distantly.

Someone was talking. Someone—

Darling, darling, darling.

That low, easy voice curled its way around Tommy's shoulders, his neck, under his chin, until it was a rope against his throat.

Tommy, darling, put your things in the hole. You know what you did. You know you deserve it.

Like a lever had been pulled inside of him, he jerked back. He felt the chill of glass beneath his feet, then the sudden warmth of his own blood.

There was a noise of protest, then hands were underneath Tommy's arms and he was being scooped up and—

He was screaming. Tommy was screaming. Or, he was trying to, but the lack of oxygen in his lungs was forcing the sound out in whines. He couldn't remember when he'd started, but his throat burned something fierce. *Had he always been screaming?*

He drifted.

Tommy cried and screamed for a long time. He started when Technoblade lifted him onto the counter, setting him up away from the glass-covered floor, and he didn't stop until his nose was bleeding and his eyes were red with tears. Technoblade wanted to cover his ears and hide from the sound of his brother's anguish, but he wasn't leaving. He'd made that promise.

It took a long time for Tommy's cries to die down and it took even longer for him to allow Technoblade to get anywhere near him with a medical kit.

Tommy's feet were Technoblade's top priority. There were multiple gashes he was concerned about, but worst of all was the nearly two-inch long shard of glass embedded in the ball of Tommy's foot. A steady stream of blood was trickling down the sole of his foot, all the way to the heel.

Tommy didn't flinch as Technoblade removed the shard and disinfected the wound. He wrapped it carefully, before taking care of the other cuts that littered Tommy's feet.

Through all of this, Technoblade spoke, low and soft as he explained his every move. But Tommy made no signal that he heard him. He blinked every now and then, but his eyes remained glazed, staring off into nothing.

When Tommy's wounds were handled, Technoblade scooped him up again and carried him swiftly to the couch. Once there, he laid Tommy down and began piling his heaviest blankets on top of him. He took off his own cloak first and bundled Tommy in it, hoping that the familiar scent would permeate whatever wall Tommy had constructed to protect himself. Then he sat on the ground beside Tommy and spoke. He let his quiet voice wash over the room, repeating promises and reassurances, hoping that it would reach Tommy through his haze and tug him back to Earth.

Technoblade couldn't count how long it took before Tommy blinked in something akin to recognition. From there, it was a matter of minutes before Tommy inhaled a sharp, stuttering

breath and his eyes began to dart.

“Tech?” Tommy’s voice came out broken and hoarse. His eyes were glassy and unfocused as he reached a trembling hand out. Technoblade took it in his own and held it gently.

“I’m here. I have you. You’re safe.”

“Tech—” Tommy’s throat seized in a sob and all at once, he was crying and reaching for his brother. Technoblade took it in stride, sitting on the couch beside Tommy and pulling him into his arms. Tommy scrambled to get into his lap, nearly clawing at Technoblade in an effort to press closer.

For a long time, Technoblade just let him cry. A tear slipped from his own eyes once or twice, falling to land in Tommy’s curls. He held Tommy tighter, soothing himself with the warmth of his brother sheltered in his arms.

Eventually though, they had to face reality.

When Tommy’s tears had dried and his breath was coming in relatively steady inhales, Technoblade ventured to find answers.

“Can you tell me what happened?” He did his best to keep his voice soft and unprobing, but Tommy still blanched at the question.

His mouth was moving, but he wasn’t quite speaking. Even with his piglin hearing, Technoblade had to duck his head to catch the word Tommy was exhaling into his shirt.

“Darling.” Tommy’s throat was stuttering and his lips were trembling. “Darling, darling, darling.” The word spilled from his lips, over and over again, like a flood of bile. Technoblade wouldn’t be surprised if Tommy *did* gag; he certainly looked nauseous enough.

He said it differently than Technoblade had, the accent stretched wide and clear, like the person saying it had wanted each letter to be heard.

Technoblade was pretty sure he understood, but he wished he didn’t.

Slowly, because Tommy was still trembling in his arms, he asked, “Did Dream call you that?”

Tommy nodded rapidly against Technoblade’s chest. “He called me lots of things,” he rasped. “Sweet things. While he hurt me.”

If Technoblade wasn’t already strung as tight as a bow string, he would have been now. He let out a long breath, doing his very best to keep the fury out of his voice.

“Okay,” he said as steadily as he could manage. “Then how about I just call you by your name? Would that be okay?”

Tommy nodded. His face was still hidden in Technoblade’s shirt, but Technoblade could feel his breaths evening out against him.

But there was one other name Technoblade had been calling Tommy since their reunification and he hated to think that it might have been upsetting the boy all this time. So he asked:

“What about kit?”

To Technoblade’s relief, Tommy lifted his head enough to mutter, his ears flicking in embarrassment, “Kit is fine.” The high of his cheeks was flushed pink. “But, uh... for now, can we just stick with that?”

“Of course.”

Tommy’s shoulders slumped in relief, like he hadn’t been sure Technoblade would agree. In a move of reassurance for them both, Technoblade took him back into his arms and held him until their hearts matched each other in steadiness.

The chicks hatched. All twelve of them, to Tommy’s glee. Technoblade laughed when Tommy proudly listed off their names:

January, February, March, April, May— all the way to December.

Tommy spent hours out in the barn with them. He let them hop all over him, laughing as their little claws tickled his skin. Technoblade stayed out with him, under the guise of brushing Carl in the connected stable. In reality, he was just happy to hear Tommy’s delighted laugh echo off the hay bales.

Tommy was okay. They were gonna be okay.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked this one! Please leave a comment if you did! They motivate me so much

<333

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Uh oh

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Panic, dissociation, implied/referenced abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Technoblade was lucky he looked out the window when he did. Well, maybe *lucky* wasn't the right word to describe this situation, but it was the best he had. He certainly hadn't been feeling any sort of good fortune when he'd caught sight of a bright green figure amid the trees beyond his front fields.

Technoblade's blood ran cold.

In this moment, Tommy was blissfully unaware of the approaching danger, and as Technoblade glanced back at him, sitting comfortably on the couch with one of Wilbur's old books perched in his lap, he wished desperately that he could remain that way.

But Dream was growing steadily closer the longer Technoblade stood wishing him away.

"Tommy." Technoblade almost didn't recognize his own voice, sharp and frigid, as he tore himself away from the window. "I need you to come here."

Tommy looked up. Frozen in time, this could have been perfect. But like the figure on the horizon, time kept marching steadily forward.

Tommy's eyes were wide. "What's going on?"

Technoblade didn't answer. Instead, he reached out his hand. Without hesitation— and gods, Technoblade would never get over Tommy's absolute trust in him— Tommy took it. When Technoblade pulled him to his feet, Wilbur's book fell to the ground. Tommy went to pick it up, but Technoblade drew him close before he could, tugging him along as he moved to dig through one of the storage chests. He surfaced with two luminous bottles before herding Tommy to the basement trapdoor.

"Techno—" Tommy's voice was wobbling with anxiety, but there wasn't time for reassurance.

“Down,” he said, pushing Tommy forcefully down the ladder. He followed him a moment later, dropping to the packed dirt ground. Tommy’s eyes were shiny in the darkness, wide as they watched Technoblade land.

“Take these,” Technoblade said shortly, shoving the potion bottles into Tommy’s hands.

Tommy spluttered, but his fists still closed around the necks of the bottles.

“Drink one now. Count six minutes, then take the other.”

“Techno, *what’s happening?*”

Technoblade didn’t want to say it. He didn’t want to see the look in Tommy’s eyes when he realized that his worst nightmare could reach him even here. But Tommy needed to know.

There was no way to sugar coat this. Fortunately, that had never really been Technoblade’s style anyway.

“It’s Dream.”

Tommy’s face drained of blood. Without another word, he downed the first potion. He shimmered for a moment, before going translucent in the dark basement.

Technoblade reached for him and managed to catch him somewhere around the shoulder. He led him to a row of barrels and pried open a non-descript one. It was empty—he’d been planning on storing his newest crop of grain in it—and the perfect fit for a malnourished teenager.

“Get in.”

“Techno—”

“*Now*, Tommy.”

Tommy’s mouth might have opened in another protest, but Technoblade would never know because he was already lifting him into the barrel.

His fingers found Tommy’s hair and he caught the edge of an ear. Tommy let out a quiet whimper at the touch, pushing up into it.

“Stay,” Technoblade said, pressing on Tommy’s head firmly. “Be quiet. And remember—count five more minutes, then drink the other potion.”

Tommy didn’t make a sound beyond a squeak as Technoblade closed the lid of the barrel.

Technoblade’s hands were shaking as he climbed the ladder. Halfway up, he stopped and took a deep breath. He was a soldier. He was the Blood God. That part of him wasn’t gone, only buried. Tommy had needed him soft, so soft was what Technoblade had become, but right now, it was the old Technoblade Tommy needed. The soldier. And for Tommy, Technoblade was pretty sure he could do just about anything.

He exhaled and hauled himself up onto the ground floor.

He'd only just planted his feet when a knock sounded on the front door. It was patterned and jovial, not unlike the kind Wilbur used to make up when they were kids. But this wasn't a secret knock from back when nothing really mattered and Wilbur wasn't the one on the other side of that door.

Technoblade swallowed, steeled himself, made himself into a shield just for Tommy. Then he opened the door.

That porcelain was extra shiny in the snow glare, Technoblade noted distantly.

"Hey, Techno, long time no see." Dream sounded too comfortable, too friendly, too everything-Tommy-couldn't-be.

"Wilbur's not here," Technoblade said flatly. Play dumb. Best case scenario—he would turn and walk away. But Technoblade could never be that lucky.

"That's too bad," Dream said lightly. "But I'm actually not here for Wilbur."

Technoblade gave a little scoff. "Think you can beat me yet?"

"I'd like to think I could." Dream's voice was all smiles. "I've got myself a little streak beating members of your family."

Technoblade's stomach rolled at that and it took everything he had not to shatter that porcelain mask then and there.

But Dream wasn't finished. "Speaking of, I've lost something recently. You wouldn't happen to have seen Tommy around, have you?"

Technoblade let his nose curl a little. "Tommy? Nah. Last I heard, he was in L'Manberg with his friends. I only got back from off-world a few weeks ago and he hasn't been by yet."

Dream's mask smiled at him blankly before a clicking of his tongue could be heard. "I see." His head tilted and he snapped suddenly. Technoblade nearly startled, but grounded himself with the dull pain from his clenched teeth. "I could have sworn someone mentioned seeing you in L'Manberg a few weeks ago."

"Well, yeah, I stopped in town when I first got back," Technoblade said as easily as he could. Every muscle was tense and his veins were made of ice, but he kept the words flowing like a river. "But a tall kid—enderman hybrid, I think—told me Tommy wasn't around that day. So I went home."

"Ah, yeah, Ranboo." Dream's voice was all too knowing. Technoblade clenched his jaw and wondered if that wasn't another innocent child Dream had sunk his claws into. "Good kid."

Technoblade pulled his lips into a thin smile. "Uh huh."

Dream leaned around him, his head tilting curiously as he gazed further into the house. Technoblade resisted the urge to block his vision.

“Doing a little rearranging?”

Rearranging?

Confused, Technoblade glanced back, following Dream’s gaze to the open trapdoor.

Fuck. He’d left the basement door wide open.

“Yeah,” he said, too quickly. His throat was suddenly hoarse, but he resisted the urge to cough. “Clearing things out to get ready for the new grain harvest.”

Dream hummed in understanding.

“Can I come in?”

Technoblade gritted his teeth, but he couldn’t afford to act suspicious. “Just for a minute,” he said stiffly. “I’m busy.”

Dream pushed by him, gazing all around Technoblade’s cabin like it was a home viewing and he was looking to purchase.

“It’s a little messy in here,” Dream said with a small laugh. He gestured at the sofa, where Tommy’s blanket and book were crumpled on the floor in front of it. “I have to say, I’m surprised.”

“You caught me off-guard,” Technoblade said flatly.

If Technoblade could see Dream’s face, he was pretty sure his brow would have been raised. “I didn’t think that was possible.”

Technoblade didn’t dignify that with an answer, only tightened his jaw as Dream moved casually about his house.

“What’s this?” Dream’s spindly fingers closed around a half-bitten golden apple and lifted it up to the light. The little teeth marks were incomparable to Technoblade’s tusks.

Technoblade’s breath caught in his throat, but he forced himself to remain steady.

“I have rats,” he said flatly. “I’m gonna poison that one and put it back in the basement. Teach them a lesson.”

Dream let out a little laugh. “Right. Sometimes you’ve just got to teach misbehaving animals a lesson.” He sounded far too gleeful for what should have been a benign statement and Technoblade had to resist the urge to gag.

“Look, Dream,” he forced out. “I’m busy.”

“Of course, of course.” Dream set down the apple and lifted his hands diplomatically. “You’ve got a farm to run. I’ll be out of your hair then. Just...” As he headed towards the door, he looked back over his shoulder. “If you see Tommy, let him know his friend’s been wondering where he is.”

Technoblade gritted his teeth. “Goodbye, Dream.”

With a two-fingered salute, Dream sauntered out the door.

Technoblade watched from the window until the green of his hoodie disappeared beyond the trees. Then he shot into motion.

“Tommy.” Technoblade’s voice was tense as he descended the ladder and made a beeline for the barrel. He pried open the barrel, ready to be tackled by a clingy, frightened kit.

But no such attack met him.

Instead, he found Tommy, curled at the bottom of the barrel, his eyes glassy and his cheeks painted with tears.

With the lid off, there was nothing to muffle Tommy’s tear-stricken begging.

“Sorry, I’m sorry.” The kit was gasping past sobs, tears streaming down his pale cheeks. “Please let me out! Techno, I’m sorry!”

“Tommy.” Technoblade’s hands were shaking as he reached into the barrel to draw Tommy out.

Tommy hiccupped and flinched away from his touch, but in the cramped space, there was nowhere to go. Technoblade caught him under the arms and pulled him out of the barrel.

Tommy’s knees buckled the moment Technoblade set him on his feet, but Technoblade had been expecting that. He adjusted as Tommy sagged against him, lowering himself to the dirt floor and drawing Tommy down with him.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy repeated, over and over again. “I don’t— I don’t know what I did, but I won’t do it again, I promise, just let me out!”

“Sh. You’re okay.” Technoblade hushed him, rocking Tommy gently in his lap. “You’re out. You’re safe. You’re not in trouble.”

For a long time, they sat like that, the basement floor cold beneath Technoblade but Tommy a warm contrast in his lap. Technoblade never stopped his flow of words, hoping that some would reach Tommy through his thick panic.

Then all at once, Tommy went rigid in his arms. His hands came up to push at Technoblade’s chest and his voice came out stiff as he said, with a new kind of terror, “Let go of me.”

Though caught off guard by the request, Technoblade didn’t hesitate to comply. He released Tommy from his arms, pulling away to give Tommy as much space as possible in the

cramped basement. Tommy wrapped his arms around himself and though Technoblade could see where his dull nails dug into his biceps, he elected not to reach to stop him this time.

“Tommy?”

The kid flinched and blinked.

Technoblade kept his voice low and steady as he probed. “Do you remember what happened?”

Something flickered across Tommy’s expression and his throat bobbed visibly. “Dream came.” He said it robotically. Like he was reporting the facts only.

Technoblade nodded slowly. “Yes. But he’s gone now. And he doesn’t know you’re here.”

On instinct, he reached for Tommy again, but the boy jolted back, nearly falling into a row of chests behind him. His sudden shift in demeanor was alarming, but it wasn’t something Technoblade could parse through in this cold, dank basement.

“Why don’t we go upstairs?” he suggested carefully. His hands were raised now where Tommy could see them. Despite his calm tone, his own heart was pounding in his chest as he realized that right now, Tommy saw him only as another facet of danger.

Tommy nodded stiffly, standing on shaky legs. He kept his distance from Technoblade as best he could in the cramped basement as he made his way over to the ladder. His hands were shaking as he gripped the rungs of the ladder.

“Careful,” Technoblade murmured, his hands hovering around Tommy as the kid climbed the ladder.

“I’m fine,” Tommy bit out. Technoblade pulled back automatically and watched from a distance as Tommy pulled himself up the ladder. He followed him, kicking the trapdoor shut behind him.

Tommy was standing in the living room, gripping his own arms and staring out the window where only snow waited.

“He’s gone,” Technoblade said softly. “I made sure of it.”

Tommy didn’t respond to those words. Instead, he turned sharply, and said, “I wanna be alone.”

“All right.”

But despite Tommy’s decree and his agreement, Technoblade followed Tommy upstairs, hovering in his doorway as Tommy settled himself in bed. The hem of his blanket was crumpled in his fists as he pulled it close.

“I’d like to go reinforce the perimeter,” Technoblade broached cautiously. “Are you gonna be okay on your own here for a bit?”

Tommy still wouldn't look at him, but he gave a stiff nod. "I'm fine," he insisted, for what seemed like the dozenth time that night.

Technoblade nodded slowly. "Okay. I won't be far. Just holler out the window if you need anything. I'll hear you."

He didn't miss the slight relief that flickered across Tommy's face at that, but it was gone before it could settle into anything solid.

Technoblade took one last look at Tommy. He was curled up on his side now, facing away from Technoblade. His shoulders were rising and falling with unsteady breaths. Technoblade ached to reach out and comfort him, but instead, he drew away, closing the door behind him and molding himself into a soldier once more.

Chapter End Notes

Here we go again :)

Please leave a comment if you liked it! I don't have a ton written for the next chapter yet, and comments will definitely motivate me to write more! <3

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Mild referenced dissociation, mention of panic attacks, referenced self-harm due to panic (mild), discussion of past abuse/manipulation

Please let me know if I missed anything!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Three days had gone by since their unwelcome visitor and Technoblade had never seen Tommy so tense. This rivaled even the twenty-four hours following his initial rescue, when so much as a blink from Technoblade was enough to send Tommy skittering.

Even worse, unlike these past few weeks, Tommy was no longer seeking Technoblade out for comfort. When Technoblade woke the morning after Dream's visit alone in his bed, he was relieved, assuming automatically that Tommy had managed to make it through the night without being plagued by nightmares. But his relief was short-lived when he went to check on Tommy and found the kit's cheeks painted with silent tears, his blankets tossed and tangled from thrashing.

Technoblade ached to take him in his arms, to wipe the tears from his cheeks and soothe him into the terror-less sleep he deserved. But Tommy froze up when Technoblade made so much as a move towards him, and the last thing Technoblade wanted to do was give Tommy a reason to fear him.

He was grateful, at least, that Tommy had the distraction of the chicks. He spent most of his time out in the barn, sitting and watching the chicks toddle about. He was able to relax better when he was alone, Technoblade knew, so as much as he would have liked to keep an eye on him at all times, Technoblade understood that it was best to let Tommy have some time to himself.

Right now, Technoblade was in the forge a few buildings away from the barn, working on a proper set of armor for Tommy. He hoped he'd never have cause to need it, but Technoblade was never one to be caught unprepared.

Tommy was, unsurprisingly, in the barn. Or, at least, that was where Technoblade thought he was before a broken yell echoed from just beyond it.

“Techno!”

Technoblade was out the door before Tommy's shout fell silent. He'd been intending to check on the kid earlier, but he'd been in the middle of handling a batch of gold he hadn't wanted to leave smelting in the furnace.

But as the pitch of Tommy's fear curled like a fist around his throat, Technoblade found he couldn't care less about the gold liquidizing in his furnace.

Technoblade tore around the side of the barn, his boots unlaced and his sword in hand, his ears swiveling as they tracked Tommy's heartbeat.

What he found made him stop in his tracks.

The sudden flash of green in his vision had him raising his sword, but he froze just as quickly as he caught sight of a familiar head of golden hair. The towering wings that cast the cloak into a dark, forest green sealed the deal.

Technoblade felt his sword go lax in his grip.

"Phil?"

At his voice, Phil turned. His hands were raised, his fingers spread harmlessly. His smile was tight as he met Technoblade's eyes.

"Hey, Tech."

Technoblade lowered his sword, his shoulders dropping in relief. "Phil. It's you." He turned sharply on Tommy. "Gods, Tommy, why'd you scare me like that—"

He stopped as he caught his first look of the kid. Tommy was pale even against the snow, trembling like a newborn foal. His knees were bent slightly like he was getting ready to bolt, and though his hands were curled into fists at his sides, they were shaking with the rest of him.

Technoblade lowered his voice as best he could. "Hey." Despite his effort to soften, Tommy still flinched.

Technoblade dropped his sword into the snow and began moving carefully towards him. He kept his hands raised as he did so, held out in front of him where Tommy could see them clearly. "Tommy, it's okay. It's just Phil. You're safe."

He could feel their father's eyes on them, sharp and perceptive. *Crowfather*, Tommy used to call him. All-seeing. That had never seemed more true than it did now, as Phil watched Technoblade handle Tommy like a cornered fox.

It took just a second too long for that haze of terror to leave Tommy's eyes. When it did, it was right back to the cold distance Technoblade had grown unfortunately familiar with. But despite his cool demeanor, Tommy was still trembling.

Uncertain, Technoblade held out his hand. For a long time, Tommy just stared at it. Then, slowly, like he was reaching into a bear trap, he took it. Technoblade let himself have a

moment of relief before he turned to face the newest member of their party.

“Why don’t we all head inside?”

Tommy was in the basement, working Technoblade’s loom to make a little blanket for the chicks. Technoblade had tried to get him to stick around for dinner— knowing just how badly Phil wanted to spend some time with the kit— but Tommy had been too wary of the new body in the house to manage a single bite at the table. So Technoblade allowed him to flee downstairs, on the condition that he take his dinner with him.

After sharing a hot meal, Technoblade and Phil settled in the living room to talk.

“I didn’t know you were back on world,” Technoblade said, handing Phil a cup of tea and sitting across from him with his own. “I would have reached out. Let you know what happened.”

“What *did* happen?” Phil implored. He looked half-desperate, his feathers fluffing up in what Technoblade recognized as a familiar concern.

Technoblade just shook his head. “Too much.”

“Tell me?”

Technoblade wasn’t sure he could. But his father had asked, so he would try his best.

“I was gone,” he said, and the dull ache that sat permanently in his chest panged a little harder at the reminder. That was where it started, didn’t it? With the worst mistake of his life?

With his stomach in knots, Technoblade recounted everything he knew. It wasn’t much. Tommy hadn’t been particularly forthcoming, though Technoblade couldn’t exactly blame him.

“And...” He paused as his tongue curled at his next words, as if bracing itself for bitterness. He wasn’t sure if he was more afraid of seeing his father’s reaction or of hearing the words aloud himself, but he could hardly get them out. He exhaled a sharp breath and just said it. “Dream branded him.”

Phil’s eyes flashed, deadly like lightning. “*What?*” His feathers flared, his wings mantling instinctively.

Technoblade just nodded, his throat tight. “Back of his neck. A fuckin’ smiley-face.” His claws were digging into his palms and he had to force himself to loosen his fists. “That’s not even touching the shit Dream did to his head.”

“Dream showed up here a few days ago. I hid Tommy and got Dream out of here without alerting him to Tommy’s presence. But...” Technoblade sighed and rubbed at his eyes. “I think I fucked up. He was...” Technoblade let out another frustrated sigh. “He was doing better. Then the fucker had the audacity to show up again. *Weeks* I’ve kept Tommy safe,

worked on easing him back into a healthy mindset, then Dream shows up and it's like we're right back where we started. He won't even *look* at me."

"It's not you," Phil said softly.

"I know." Technoblade did know, but the knowledge didn't help. "At least he still has the chicks," he said with a half-hearted smile. "I don't think we're gonna be able to eat any of them once they're grown. He's gotten too attached." Despite the mock-annoyance in his tone, he found he didn't really mind.

Phil's lips curled in a fond smile. "I think you might just have to accept that you now have twelve pet chickens. They were the only thing he would talk to me about while you made dinner."

Technoblade hummed, though he couldn't fully hide his lack of displeasure at that.

For a few minutes, they were silent, both lost in their thoughts.

Then, Phil gave a sad little smile. "He used to call me Dad," he said wistfully.

Grimly, Technoblade said, "He used to do a lot of things. But he's moving at his own pace. We can't rush him just because we want our kid back."

Phil nodded resolutely, though his expression remained sad.

"He's... not doing well, Dad." Technoblade felt like a failure just admitting it, but it wouldn't do Tommy any good to deny him Phil's perspective for the sake of protecting Technoblade's pride. "Just two days ago, he was seeking out comfort and communicating with me, but now..."

"Dream's visit really did a number on him, huh?" Phil said pensively.

"He just shut down." Technoblade shook his head, that familiar pit of hopelessness widening in his chest. "I wish I knew what was going on in his head."

"You already said it, mate: He needs time."

Technoblade didn't say anything to that. There was such a thing as giving someone too much space; the last thing he wanted to do was let Tommy think he could pull away from Technoblade entirely. Technoblade had lost his little brother once before. He wasn't about to let it happen again.

"Are you all right?" His father's voice was soft and unprobing, but Technoblade couldn't help but feel the way it wormed into his heart.

He gave a tired shrug. "Does it matter?"

"Of course it does." Phil sounded so earnest, Technoblade almost wanted to cry. In this moment, he wished desperately that he had never grown up. That none of this had happened

and Tommy was still a little kid following after Technoblade like a duckling. He wanted his father to swoop in, to fix things, to make their family whole again.

But they couldn't go back. If anything had been made clear to Technoblade as he grew, it was that time didn't care how you felt. It was a road in one direction and even the rearview mirror became blurred sometimes.

"I'm fine," Technoblade lied.

But of course, his father had always been able to see right through him. "No, you're not."

"No," Technoblade agreed, giving in immediately. "I'm not." He could feel his father's eyes on him, clear and all-seeing. More ancient than Technoblade could understand and filled with more love than Technoblade could stomach in one sitting.

"Don't blame yourself for this, mate." Technoblade wanted to hate the easy way his father picked him apart, but he found he didn't have the strength.

"I *left*," Technoblade said, a note of despair in his voice. He buried his face in his hands, rubbing at his dry eyes. "How is this not my fault?"

"You're not the only one who left." Phil's voice was quiet, but Technoblade liked to think he knew him well enough to detect the guilt behind it. "I failed Tommy, more than you ever did."

"You were with Wil though," Technoblade argued fruitlessly. "Tommy was my responsibility."

"You're all my children," Phil said plainly. "The three of you will always be my responsibility."

Technoblade didn't lift his head from his hands, but he felt it when the couch dipped beside him and a dark wing stretched across his back. He shuddered at the feeling, some of the tension draining from his shoulders.

"I know you blame yourself," Phil said quietly. "And I know that what I say might not change that. But listen when I tell you that your mistakes are not irreparable. You're here now and I know you're not going anywhere." His feathers were warm against Technoblade's back, a comfort in the darkness of this moment. "Tommy knows that too."

Technoblade nodded, his mouth dry. He lifted his face from his hands, though he closed his eyes as even the soft lantern light stung in his vision.

"I want what you want," Phil continued. "I want my son to feel safe putting his faith in his family." Phil's wings were the sturdiest shield Technoblade had ever sheltered beneath and as they curled a little tighter around him, he found himself leaning into their warmth. "But I want my other son to have faith in *himself*. That matters too." Phil's voice dropped to a whisper, the words ghosting through Technoblade's hair as he let his weight fall into his father. Phil held him steady. "*You* matter too, Techno."

Technoblade let out a shaky exhale. He wanted to believe his father. But as his mind wandered to Tommy, weaving a blanket downstairs for his precious chicks, he couldn't convince himself that there was anything in the world more important than his little brother.

"I'll do better," he said, his cheek pressed to his father's shoulder. "For both of us."

For Tommy was what he really meant though, and he knew his father heard it too.

The next morning, Tommy had a panic attack. They were lucky— And there was that word again. *Lucky*. Lucky because Tommy wasn't holding anything he could use to hurt himself. It was already a fight to keep him from tearing at his skin with his claws. He even went after his ears, yanking ruthlessly at the silky appendages until Technoblade was able to restrain him fully.

It was the green of Phil's cloak that set him off, startling him as he turned the corner into the living room. After that, it was decided that it would be best for everyone if Phil found somewhere else to stay. Technoblade knew it killed Phil to walk away while his son was hurting, but he had little choice. The only thing worse than giving Tommy his distance would be to stay when it would only damage Tommy more.

And just like that, they were back where they started. Tommy, keeping the world at an arm's distance, and Technoblade, too cowardly to reach for him across the gap between them.

Tommy kept his bedroom door shut tight these days, and every night when he would disappear silently into his room, Technoblade would stand outside the door, lay a soft knock in one of Wilbur's patterns, and say quietly, "I love you."

He never got an answer and he always went to bed cold.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked this one! A relatively easy chapter before shit hits the fan. Buckle up, folks :)

Please leave a comment if you liked it! I'm working on chapter 8 rn!

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Dissociation, animal death, vomiting, emotional manipulation, blood/violence, mild unintentional self-harm as a result of dissociation

Chapter Notes

Okay, people, big warning for animal death here. I don't think it's super graphic imo, but it is involved in the majority of this chapter's plot, so if that's something you want to skip, I'm going to leave a chapter description in the end notes.

I'm really proud of how this chapter turned out because I'm not great at writing intense scenes usually, but if the themes of this chapter will bother you, PLEASE DON'T UPSET YOURSELF BY READING IT.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I’m going to go check on the chicks.” The words came to Tommy’s tongue automatically, his tone robotic as he swung on his cloak and shoved his feet into his boots— new ones, because despite everything, Technoblade had still taken the time to craft him some. At least five times a day, he uttered these same words and made this same trek through the snow. It was routine now and so was Technoblade’s response:

“I’ll be here,” Technoblade said, as steady as ever. “Holler if you need me.”

Tommy knew he wouldn’t.

He couldn’t explain his sudden withdrawal, but somewhere in the cold darkness of that storage barrel, with his worst nightmare walking freely above him, something had clicked in his mind. Something awful. Something worse than fear.

His body couldn’t take being afraid anymore. So, in an effort to preserve what he could of himself, he stopped allowing it. It just so happened that he stopped every other emotion too.

Even his hands were numb these days, always raised like a shield in front of him.

He ached to reach out, to seek the comfort he knew Technoblade would provide, but he couldn’t bring himself to. He couldn’t make himself vulnerable like that, couldn’t roll over and show his soft underbelly where anyone with claws could so easily rake him open.

So he remained numb. Because it was easy. Because it was safe.

The only solace he allowed himself was the hours he spent with the twelve little beating hearts on legs. The chicks were the purest thing he had ever known, soft and curious and everything he knew he used to be.

He wondered how long it had been since he'd been as carefree as these perfect creatures. As he cupped them in his hands, he wondered how something so small could ever feel safe. Didn't they know the world wanted to hurt them?

So he stayed with them, for hours at a time, guarding them and playing with them and warming them with his body and the blankets he'd woven just for them. They'd loved the first one he'd made, so much, in fact, they'd dragged it into their nest where it was eventually picked apart by sharp claws. So Tommy made another and another, until there were almost enough for each chick to have their own. They were small, the size of handkerchiefs, but they were thick and colorful and everything a chick could want. At least, as far as Tommy could tell.

When it came to kids, he knew he wasn't supposed to have favorites, but how was he supposed to help loving August the most when she would tuck herself into his breast pocket, curling up warm against his chest like another heart outside of his own. The others would never have to know, he reasoned. Besides, it wasn't like he didn't love them all. He did, on a level that made him ache. It was just that maybe, he loved August just a teeny bit more.

She was in his pocket now, pecking at the seeds in his hand as he scattered more across the ground for the chicks flurrying around his curled legs.

The door to the barn creaked open behind him— Tommy told the chicks everyday that he was going to oil it, but so far, he hadn't gotten around to it.

"I'm fine, Tech," he said, not turning from where he kneeled in front of the chicks. Technoblade checked on him far too often for his taste. The point of being out here was to *avoid* human contact— Tommy thought that if anyone would understand that, it was Technoblade, certified hermit. But regardless, his brother poked his head into the barn at least once an hour. At this point, Tommy wasn't sure if it was more for his benefit or Technoblade's.

But this time, his brother's low hum of satisfaction didn't greet Tommy's ears. Instead, something else entirely made every muscle in his body seize with fear.

"Hey there, Tommy. I've been looking everywhere for you."

The smirk in Dream's voice was nearly enough to make Tommy vomit. He whirled around, pushing himself to his feet too fast to be safe with the chicks scrambling beneath him. Fortunately, they avoided his clumsy boots as Tommy kept his horrified gaze fixed firmly on that porcelain mask.

"Dream." The name came out hoarser than he'd thought it would.

“That’s right.” Dream shut the barn door behind him as he sauntered the rest of the way in.

“How—” Tommy wasn’t numb anymore. He wished he was. *Gods*, he wished he was, but fear had a stranglehold on him. “How did you find me?”

Dream let out a little laugh. It wasn’t friendly. “I’m your best friend, Tommy. I know you better than anyone in the world.”

“We’re not friends.” The words felt hollow, useless.

“Did Technoblade tell you that?” Dream sneered.

Tommy didn’t say anything.

“He’s trying to trick you, Tommy. You’re just a pet project for him. Nothing more than one of these stupid fucking chickens.”

Faster than lightning, Dream’s hand snapped out, catching Henrietta around the throat and hefting her into the air. She squawked, her wings flapping in alarm, but Dream just grabbed her by the feet and flipped her upside down. He let go of her throat then, letting her dangle helplessly by the feet.

Tommy’s heart was in his throat. “Let her go.” The words came out hoarse, his mouth too dry to speak properly.

Dream’s head tilted the way it always did when Tommy stepped out of line. Tommy’s heart sank.

“When Technoblade gets bored of you and all your fucking problems, what do you think is going to happen?”

Henrietta was still squawking in Dream’s grip, hanging upside down by her feet. Her wings were flapping uselessly, but Dream held her tightly. The porcelain smile of his mask had never seemed so cruel as he lifted Henrietta up.

“No—!” Even as Tommy reached for her, he knew he was too late.

Dream’s arm snapped out in a flash, slamming Henrietta into the barn wall.

The crack of her little skull against the wood would echo in Tommy’s ears forever.

He didn’t know he’d fallen to his knees until he felt the cold of the hay seep through the patched knees of his pants. His mouth was open in a silent gasp for air, but nothing filled his heaving lungs.

Dream dropped Henrietta’s too-still body to the ground and approached Tommy. Silently, Tommy begged the chicks to scatter, terrified that they would be caught underfoot. To his barely-living relief, they managed to escape Dream’s calculated steps.

Once he was right in front of Tommy, Dream bent down, the mouth of his mask just inches from Tommy's ear.

"This is what happens when you disobey me." Dream's voice was cold but satisfied. Tommy couldn't breathe. "Think about where your priorities lie."

There was blood on the wood of the barn wall. Tommy couldn't tear his eyes from it, or from where Henrietta lay motionless beneath.

Dream straightened then and patted Tommy on the head. His hand brushed Tommy's ear and Tommy couldn't help his violent flinch, his whole body itching to escape from the touch. Dream let out a cruel laugh.

Then Tommy blinked and the barn door was swinging shut with a squeal of its hinges that would haunt Tommy for the rest of his life.

For a long time, he stayed there, kneeling in the cold hay and watching as the remains of his hope lay scattered and frantic across the barn.

The chicks were crowding around their mother, peeping and pecking at her. It sounded like begging in the worst way. Begging for it all to just be a game. Their distraught was tangible and it seeped into Tommy's skin like a toxin.

It's not real, it's not real, it's not real. Please, please, please.

The chicks were squawking louder now, pecking harder at their mother in desperation.

"Stop it," Tommy choked out. He pushed himself to his feet, his hands scraping against the dry hay, and stumbled to where Henrietta lay. He tried to push the chicks away, but there were too many for his trembling hands to manage.

"Stop it." He was begging and the sound of it mixed in with the chicks' distress. He pushed three of them away—the winter chicks, he realized distantly. December, January, and February—trying to shield Henrietta's body from their terrified little beaks.

Desperate, he scooped Henrietta up and clutched her tight to his chest. He could feel her blood against his shirts, leaking into his hands. He made it two steps before his mouth filled with bile and he had to put her down in favor of staggering away and throwing up.

Her blood was itching against his skin. He gagged, clutching at his own chest as his throat seized.

Then something moved against his heart.

Oh gods. August. She was still in his pocket, wriggling against his chest, peeping loudly in an echo of her siblings' distress. Tommy couldn't put her down fast enough. He watched in muted horror as she scurried through the hay to her siblings, joining them where they crowded around their mother's too-still body.

Tommy couldn't take it anymore. He staggered for the door.

His boots were loose— he'd untied them to let his feet breathe a little as he relaxed in the barn— and now snow fell in through the tops and melted in his socks as he waded through the calf-high drift.

He only made it halfway to the house before he threw up again. He watched, fascinated, as it melted away the snow around his feet.

The front door banged open suddenly and he jerked his head up, his eyes wide as they caught sight of Technoblade on the porch.

"Tommy?"

He couldn't force a single word past his sour tongue. But as it turned out, he didn't need to.

Technoblade was at his side in an instant, crouched to meet Tommy at his level, his hands dropping heavy on Tommy's shoulders to feel over him for injury. Tommy was pliant as he searched him, his body numb under Technoblade's hands.

Dazed, Tommy lifted his bloody hands and stared at them.

Technoblade caught sight of them too and took his wrists between gentle fingers. His voice was soft but insistent. "Tommy, whose blood is this?"

Tommy blinked at Technoblade. He could feel tears burning in his eyes, but they didn't fall. His lips moved of their own accord. "Henrietta's."

Horror flickered across Technoblade's expression. "What?" His eyes were bright with alarm, tracking over Tommy in search of clues beyond Tommy's blank expression and bloody hands. "What happened?"

Tommy didn't say anything. He was pretty sure if he opened his mouth, he was going to throw up again.

For a brief moment, Technoblade's hand brushed over Tommy's cheek. Then it slid to Tommy's shoulder and squeezed it firmly as Technoblade stood.

"Stay here." Technoblade's voice left no room for argument.

Tommy didn't move as Technoblade hurried past him, even though he could feel snow sinking into the tops of his boots and melting like acid in his socks.

He stared at his hands, where Henrietta's blood was drying under his fingernails and in the grooves of his palms.

This wasn't new— he'd had the blood of animals on his hands before. He was raised on a farm, for gods' sakes— slaughtering animals was simply a part of life.

But this was different.

This was different because it was Henrietta and because what was there to thank her for?

His father had raised him to be grateful to the animals they slaughtered as food. They were treasured, treated well, and they were slaughtered humanely and for a purpose. But this—this was aimless. Purposeless. Cruel.

As he stared at the blood painting his hands, he was overcome with the desire to remove it. His body didn't feel like his own as he lowered himself to a crouch and stuck his hands directly into the snow. They were submerged to his wrists, hiding any trace of blood Tommy carried with him.

He didn't know how much time passed before Technoblade's voice came from behind.

"Tommy?" Technoblade sounded uncharacteristically hesitant as he stepped audibly through the snow. (Technoblade could walk silently when he wanted to, but Tommy knew that the crunch of snow beneath his boots was for his benefit. He didn't have it in him to be grateful.)

Tommy didn't move. He couldn't feel his hands anymore, but he supposed that was better than the warmth of Henrietta's blood on his skin. Apparently, his brother disagreed.

"Tommy." Technoblade's voice sharpened in alarm and Tommy felt his shadow fall over him before Technoblade pulled his hands forcefully out of the snow. His fingertips were blue. "*Gods.*"

Technoblade sounded disappointed. Tommy wished he wouldn't, but he knew that was too much to ask when all Tommy did was disappoint.

The heat of Technoblade's hands as he rubbed feeling back into Tommy's fingers hurt worse than the snow had. He wanted to pull away, to escape the burn of sudden warmth on his frigid skin, but he didn't want to disappoint Technoblade again. So he was pliant as Technoblade pulled him upright, drawing Tommy close to him and tucking his hands under his cloak.

Tommy's face was inches away from Technoblade's chest and he just didn't have the strength to keep his distance anymore.

Slowly, slowly enough that Technoblade could push him away if he wanted to, Tommy let his head fall to rest against his brother's sturdy chest. He felt Technoblade's breath catch in his throat before he let out a short exhale. Tommy just closed his eyes.

For a long time, Technoblade didn't move. He just stood there, mercifully, as Tommy pressed his face to the warmth of Technoblade's body. It wasn't exactly a hug; the only contact Tommy was initiating was his cheek against Technoblade's chest. The rest was artificial, manufactured as Technoblade did his best to warm up Tommy's hands. There were tears lodged in Tommy's throat, but he refused to let them fall. Instead, he focused on the burn of his hands as Technoblade eased them out of their numbness.

"Toms?" Technoblade's voice was low, a warm breath in Tommy's hair. "Can we go inside now?"

Tommy gave a little nod, but he made no move to pull away.

Technoblade let go of Tommy's hands then, easing them back down to his side. "I'm gonna pick you up, okay?"

Tommy gave a little nod. The lump in his throat was growing. He was shaking, but it wasn't from the cold.

Large hands slid beneath his thighs and hefted him into the air. With an echo of a reflex created in his youth, he wrapped his legs around Technoblade's waist and let his head fall to rest on his brother's broad shoulder.

He couldn't do this. He couldn't face this.

So he let himself drift.

Technoblade had never been seized with such fear as when he saw Tommy, his hands bloody and his eyes wide, stumbling through the snow.

The look on his face was something Technoblade knew he wouldn't be able to shake for a long time. It was all he could do to check Tommy for injury, before hurrying past him to the barn.

The scene Technoblade found there spoke of something awful.

He'd been struck the moment he opened the door with the sour smell of vomit and the frantic, terrified cheeping of a dozen babies. Numbly—because he couldn't do this if he thought too hard about it—he removed Henrietta's body from the floor and wrapped it up to dispose of later. Then he herded the chicks into their indoor coop. He would clean up the blood and vomit-stained hay later, but right now, it was for the best that the chicks be contained. He took a moment to arrange the blankets Tommy had made into a little nest in the coop. In the absence of their mother's warmth, the chicks gathered there, huddling around each other with a chorus of the most heartbreakingly confused sounds Technoblade was pretty sure he'd ever heard. After that, he had to step out.

He waited for a moment just outside the barn before he ventured back to Tommy. He needed to think, needed to calibrate, needed to run over the facts he currently had.

Tommy didn't kill Henrietta. That, Technoblade was certain of. Tommy loved Henrietta. He wasn't capable of such a thing. Later, he decided, he would solve this mystery. Right now, though, his little brother needed him.

That was proven more than true when he found Tommy with his hands submerged in the snow drift. It took every ounce of self-control he possessed to keep his grip on Tommy's wrists gentle as he tried to warm them up. After rubbing them between his hands in an effort to reinduce circulation, he tucked them under his own cloak, where he hoped the heat of his body would bring them back to a natural temperature.

Tommy's eyes were unfocused, but as Technoblade pulled him a little closer, Tommy's head lolled forward to fall against Technoblade's chest.

Technoblade had never been more grateful when Tommy initiated that little bit of contact between them. The press of his trembling cheek to Technoblade's chest was nearly enough to break them both. When Technoblade lifted Tommy into his arms, he found he never wanted to put him down again.

But he had to, so he did, two minutes later on the living room couch.

He almost wished Tommy would cling to him, would refuse to let go, but he didn't. Instead, his hands slid easily away from Technoblade and fell limply into his lap.

Technoblade crouched in front of him, clasping Tommy's hands in his own.

"Tommy, I need you to tell me what happened." Technoblade kept his voice as firm as he could manage, but he couldn't hide the tremble in it.

"Henrietta's dead." It was all Tommy seemed to be able to say. That, and: "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I didn't protect her."

"Protect her from *what*?"

"It was my fault." Tommy's hands were shaking in Technoblade's grip and his breaths were coming faster and faster. "It was my fault!"

"Tommy—"

Tommy just closed his eyes and turned his head as tears leaked down his cheeks.

"Okay," Technoblade said. It was all he could manage. "Okay." He sat down beside Tommy on the couch and, with only a second of hesitation, pulled Tommy into his side. Tommy went willingly—that is to say, he didn't fight. Technoblade hated to think of Tommy resigning himself to anything, but in this moment, Technoblade could only be grateful that he got to hold Tommy close.

That night, Tommy screamed until his throat was raw and bloody. Technoblade laid with him, on top of the covers on Tommy's bed, waking him each time a nightmare took hold.

Technoblade didn't remember when they finally drifted off for good, but when he woke, Tommy was clutched tight to his chest, his silent, sleeping tears dampening the fabric of Technoblade's shirt. Technoblade held him a little closer and tried to replace the memories of Tommy's screams with the devastation of this silent moment.

Chapter Summary: While Tommy is playing in the barn with his chicks, Dream sneaks up on him and mentally/emotionally terrorizes him by killing Henrietta. Dream leaves then and Tommy is left horrified and panicking over Henrietta's death and the chicks' reaction to it. He leaves the barn and catches Technoblade's attention from the house when he vomits into the snow. After running out to meet Tommy, Technoblade sees the scene in the barn. He cleans it up, then takes Tommy back to the house to take care of him. Tommy doesn't tell Technoblade that Dream was there and in the face of a silent, dissociating Tommy, Technoblade is left guessing as to what happened.

Sorry for the angst, but I hope you all liked it! If it upset you though, please don't leave a mean comment, they make me really sad. I also do not like what Dream did, but it is part of the story, so please respect that.

If you *did* like it though, please leave a comment! I'm hoping to finish the next chapter and have it posted by tomorrow.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Dissociation (not as bad as last chapter), violence/blood, emotional manipulation

Chapter Notes

Getting down to it! The next chapter is the biggie :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wasn't built to be silent. His whole life, *silent* was one thing he'd never been. There was a story Phil told often, his voice fond as he described the moment he'd first found Tommy, abandoned in the woods, and claimed him as his own. A one year old, shivering in the cold and screaming at the top of his little lungs. He didn't stop when Phil swaddled him in his cloak, or as Phil spoke softly to him for the entire walk back to the cabin. He screamed through his bath, through his meal, through Phil's first and second and third attempts at laying him down to sleep.

But when Technoblade—a teenager and exasperated with the constant noise—reached into Wilbur's old crib where Tommy was kicking and screaming, lifted him into his arms, and rumbled out a begrudging purr, Tommy's red-faced shrieks fell to quiet whimpers. Then Tommy's reaching fingers found Technoblade's pink hair and the tears on his cheeks became memories. Along with Technoblade's ability to preserve his personal space.

That night, Technoblade was dubbed the "Tommy-Whisperer."

Wilbur could make him laugh and Phil could make him smile, but it was Technoblade who'd always been able to dry Tommy's tears and hushed his frightened cries.

But that didn't mean Tommy was quiet from then on. In fact, it was the opposite. Tommy, at his base level, was loud. It was who he was. If you didn't hear him before you saw him, it wasn't Tommy. Protest was ingrained in his bones.

But *silent* was how Tommy found himself now, close-lipped in the worst way. Every time he opened his mouth, something reached up his throat, dried out his tongue, and stole the very words from his lips.

The only sounds he made these days were screams in the night and gasps as he jolted awake, Technoblade's hands on his shoulders as he yanked him from yet another nightmare of porcelain masks and bloody hay.

Tommy hadn't stepped foot in the barn since the incident. Technoblade took care of the chicks now while Tommy waited just outside, his hands clamped tight over his ears to block out the sounds of cheeping.

He couldn't bear to go near them, not when he knew it would only put them in danger. If Dream wanted to kill everything he loved, then Tommy would love nothing.

But if Dream had taught Tommy anything, it was that Tommy was selfish. And once again, his selfishness won out because despite his desire to keep his loved ones safe, Tommy couldn't bring himself to keep his distance from Technoblade. The fear that gripped Tommy at even the thought of being far from him was unbearable, and he found himself unable to stray more than twenty yards from his brother.

Tommy justified his selfishness by telling himself that Technoblade could protect himself. Therefore, it was safe to love him. That was the conclusion Tommy's terror-rattled mind had drawn and that was what he was sticking with.

Besides, it was easy to feel secure in his decision when he woke up to thick arms around him, the weight of his brother's hold staving off the nightmares that threatened to follow him into wakefulness. Just like when he was a baby—soothed only by the strength of his big brother's arms.

He knew Technoblade noticed his newfound attachment—How could he not, when Tommy trailed after him everywhere?—but he didn't mention it. Tommy hoped his constant presence wouldn't become an annoyance to his brother; he didn't think he could bear to be pushed away when he'd only just found the courage to seek out his protection.

But Technoblade bore the burden of Tommy's presence silently, allowing him to shadow him wherever he went. Like now, for example, as Tommy perched on a hay bale and watched as Technoblade mucked out Carl's stall.

The horse was in the field, enjoying the open space, and while Tommy once would have gone out to join him in the fresh air, he remained in the thick-scented barn, both sheltered by his older brother's presence and weighed down by the twelve chicks skittering just a wall away from him.

"Tommy, would you go fetch me a feeding bucket?"

Tommy hesitated. He wasn't exactly keen on the idea of straying far from Technoblade, but with Technoblade busy in Carl's stall, he didn't exactly have a free hand to grab what he needed. Tommy was already likely getting on Technoblade's nerve with his little shadow act; the least he could do was make himself useful.

So he exited the stable, rounding the building to where Technoblade usually kept his extra feeding supplies.

But there were no feeding buckets behind the stable or the barn.

Ugh. He'd have to walk all the way to the storage shed then.

As he began his walk, kicking the chunks of snow in front of him, he considered how nice it was to feel such a simple emotion as annoyance. He hadn't had room for such a thing in these past few weeks and though it felt foreign after all this time, it was comforting as well. A reminder.

Unfortunately, Tommy had never been lucky enough to live in peace.

"Hey, Tommy." The voice dripped like honey, all satisfaction as it crawled over the back of Tommy's neck. "Where's your bodyguard at?"

No. Not again. Please, please not again.

He turned slowly, suddenly hyper aware of the distance between himself and Technoblade. Between himself and safety.

It was a dream. It was just another horrible nightmare and any second now, Technoblade was going to yank him from sleep and dry his tears and everything was going to be all right.

But as Dream took a step towards him, Tommy began to catalog the burn of Arctic wind on his nose, the tremble of his jaw that clattered his teeth together, and the taste of blood where he'd bitten down on his tongue, and he knew intimately and all at once that this was no nightmare.

"I've been watching." Dream sounded so smug— like he always did, but worse somehow. "You've been sticking awfully close to Technoblade. I think you might have forgotten who you belong to."

This wasn't happening. *This wasn't happening.*

A hand closed around his wrist, pulling it up until Tommy was on his toes, fighting to stay in place as Dream tugged him.

This was happening. Oh gods.

"You've had your fun," Dream sneered, curling his fist tighter around Tommy's thin wrist. "But it's time you come home."

Tommy opened his mouth, his brother's name on his tongue and the most desperate cry he possessed building in his chest.

No sound came out.

His days of silence had taken their toll on him and now he was paying the price for it.

Dream watched, unimpressed, as Tommy's mouth fell shut in defeat.

“Tommy. Let’s go. Now.” Dream’s grip was unforgiving around Tommy’s wrist. His nails were digging into his skin where the sleeve of his cloak rode up, leaving half-moon marks—just more evidence of Dream’s ownership of him.

“Dream, I—” His throat was seizing and tears were burning in his eyes, but he wasn’t going to cry. Not in front of Dream. “I’m not going with you.”

“Sorry?” Dream’s voice was sharp. Dangerous. Everything Tommy feared. He could already feel the singe of fire on his skin and he cringed automatically, hunching his shoulders and cowering away from Dream.

“Tommy?”

Tommy could have sobbed with relief. He’d never been so grateful to hear his father’s voice, thin and sharp like steel behind him.

“*Dad.*”

He tried to turn, but Dream still had a death grip on his wrist. It burned as he tried to pull away and his knees buckled as pain shot up his wrist.

“Dream.” Phil was approaching steadily, his hand resting on the short-sword that hung from his belt. “Let go of my son.”

“Hey, Philza.” Dream let out a little laugh, but Tommy could hear the tension beneath it. Dream was angry. Tommy didn’t want to be here when Dream was angry. “Long time no see.”

“Now, Dream. I’m not going to ask again.”

“Tommy and I were just playing a game. Right, Tommy?” Dream’s nails dug a little further into Tommy’s wrist and Tommy had to sink his teeth into his bottom lip to bite back a whimper.

He locked eyes with his father and though Dream’s grip was cold around his wrist, he found strength in the matching blue of his father’s irises. His expression pleading, he shook his head, over and over again.

Resolve settled across Phil’s face.

“You’re going to let Tommy go,” Phil said, his voice as sharp as the sword he drew. “And I’ll consider not killing you.”

Dream let out a tense, breathy laugh, like he was biting back annoyance. “I don’t think you could if you wanted to, Philza.”

Phil adjusted his grip on his sword. “Well, I want to. Now let’s see if I can.”

Without a word of warning, he launched himself into the air and locked his wings in a dive towards Dream.

“Tommy, run!”

Tommy didn’t hesitate. With a fierce yank, Tommy broke free of Dream’s grip and took off.

He’d never quite gotten the hang of running through the snow and he nearly fell multiple times along the way, flinching violently each time Phil and Dream’s blades clashed in a shriek of metal.

Technoblade turned as Tommy slammed open the stable door, nearly staggering as he caught Tommy’s by the shoulders and held him steady. His eyes were wide with alarm, his hands already running over Tommy’s form in search of injury.

“Tommy, what—”

“It’s Dream!” Tommy was crying, choking on sobs as he tried to force the words out around his seizing throat. “Dad’s fighting him off, but Dream— Tech, he’s gonna *kill* him!”

Technoblade’s hands tightened on his shoulders enough to hurt as he snapped out an order:

“Stay here.”

Then he was gone with a slam of the stable door behind him.

Tommy was hyperventilating.

Stay here? Where he was exposed? Fuck no.

Before he could think of anything other than hiding himself away in the darkest corner of Technoblade’s property, he was stumbling out of the stable and into the attached barn.

The chicks were peeping and he shushed them hurriedly, grateful that they were already locked in their indoor coop. He scanned the barn for a place to hide, debating between the empty feeding stalls and the hayloft. There wasn’t a ladder leading up to the hayloft— Technoblade hadn’t gotten around to building one yet. Rather, there were a few bolts jutting out of the wall near its edge that served as a sort of makeshift staircase. It was dangerous and unstable and Tommy was decidedly not allowed to climb it, but it was also inconspicuous. If you didn’t know what you were looking for, you would never recognize it as the entrance to the loft.

Distance was safety. Even more than that, secrecy was safety.

The hayloft it was.

Tommy scrambled over to the side of the barn and clambered up onto the hay bales stacked there. The bolts were sharp under Tommy’s hands as he hauled himself up and it occurred to him distantly that he had never seen Technoblade make this climb without thick gloves on. He could feel the rusty metal biting into his palms and knew that by the time he got to the top, his fingers would probably be slick with blood. He didn’t care.

The thirty seconds it took Tommy to drag himself up to the loft seemed to last closer to thirty minutes. He was panting by the time his knees landed on the rough wood and his hands were stinging something fierce. He could see the bloody handprints he left behind as he crawled to the very back of the hayloft and jammed himself between the storage chests there. Then he waited, listening with bated breath and his head between his knees for the sound of either triumph or defeat.

Dream was a decent fighter, Technoblade was willing to admit that. Even against both Technoblade and Phil, he'd held his own for a good few minutes, but he was tiring now and it was clear. Technoblade advanced on him, cutting away each lift of Dream's sword with a swift swing of his own.

Phil had taken a slash to the inside of his wing and though he was still on his feet, he wasn't helping much anymore. That was fine. Technoblade was happy to do this himself.

He swung again and this time, the force of it was enough to knock Dream's sword clear out of his grip. With Dream off-balance, all it took was a swift kick to his knee to knock him flat into the snow. In an instant, Technoblade had the edge of his sword leveled at his throat. He wasn't planning on drawing this out, but he had one thing to say first.

"Stay away from him." Every word was hissed with more venom than Technoblade knew himself to possess.

Dream only looked up at him, unwavering, and cocked his head as if in a smile. "He's already mine."

Technoblade felt no satisfaction as he plunged the sword into Dream's chest.

As the body dissipated beneath him, Technoblade dropped his sword and turned to Phil.

"How bad is it?" he demanded, stalking towards him as his father mantled his damaged wing awkwardly.

"Not bad," Phil said, though his voice was strained. "You have health potions?"

Technoblade jerked his head at the house. "Inside. You need me to get you there?"

Phil shook his head with a wince. "Get Tommy."

For once, Technoblade was happy to follow orders.

Despite witnessing Dream's death with his own eyes, despite feeling his body dissipate beneath Technoblade's boot, he couldn't shake the fear that gripped him, the fear he knew wouldn't let up until he had Tommy in his vision and then in his arms.

He threw open the stable doors and found nothing but an empty stable and hurried, muddled tracks.

Technoblade couldn't help the panic that leaked into his voice as he whirled around, searching for any sign of Tommy's golden hair or twitching ears. "Tommy!"

"Techno?" Tommy's voice was muffled and distanced. Technoblade shoved through the door that connected the stable to the barn and was overcome by the sound of twelve little chicks peeping frantically at him.

"Tommy! Where are you?"

"Tech." Tommy's voice came from above, wobbly with tears. As Technoblade's eyes snapped up, Tommy's face appeared, pale and trembling over the edge of the hayloft.

Technoblade felt what remained of his terror melt away inside of him. His shoulders dropped and he exhaled a heavy breath, his hand coming up to press flat against his chest.

"Gods. Are you hurt?"

Tommy lifted his hands to showcase bloody palms. "It was an accident."

Dark patches stained the hay near his knees and Technoblade didn't have to glance at the wall to know that he'd find blood on the climbing bolts.

"You're all right," Technoblade said, stepping up onto a hay bale and reaching up towards the edge of the loft. "Come 'ere."

Tommy obeyed, stretching out his arms until Technoblade was able to get a grip under his arms and pull him down.

Technoblade winced as he got a better look at Tommy's hands. His palms were sufficiently bloodied, hay sticking to his dirty skin and drying over his open cuts. The cuts seemed largely superficial, but if Tommy had gotten them from the rusted bolts, a regeneration potion or two would be necessary to prevent infection.

Technoblade stepped down from the hay bale, but he didn't set Tommy on his feet. Instead, he guided the kid's legs to wrap around his waist, hitching him a little closer. To his relief, Tommy clung to him like a koala, throwing his arms around his neck and letting his claws sink into the fabric of Technoblade's cloak as extra grip.

"He's dead," Technoblade said, his voice as firm as his hold. "I killed him."

Tommy nodded into his neck. "I saw the death message." But despite his words, he didn't sound very reassured.

"What's wrong?"

"He still has two lives left," Tommy whimpered, and the fear in his voice was like a stake to Technoblade's heart.

Technoblade held Tommy close, reassuring himself with the feeling of Tommy's rapid heartbeat against his own.

“Not for long.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope y'all liked this one! I'm working really hard on the climax and it should be out in a day or two. I really want it to be good, so I'm taking a little extra time :)

Please leave a comment if you like it! I love y'all down in the comments section, you really make my day <3

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Violence/blood, mental/emotional manipulation, gaslighting, mentioned animal death

Chapter Notes

Okay, I'm really proud of this one actually

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I want him dead, Phil.” Technoblade’s voice was low and cold in the kitchen. Tommy had half an instinct to be afraid from where he stood listening around the corner, but his body didn’t follow through. Technoblade was safe. That had been a hard lesson to learn, but Tommy had learned it in its entirety.

Phil sounded tired as he answered. “I know you do, Techno, but you need to think of the bigger picture.”

“I *am*. He’s a manipulative, predatory son of a bitch and he needs to go.”

“I want him dead just as much as you do, but think about *Tommy*. He’s safe right now. He’s in this house and he’s safe. Don’t take away that stability just because you want revenge.”

“Yes, but there are other kids on this server!” Technoblade’s voice was rising, but Phil’s shush lowered it to a hiss. “You think that just because we take Tommy away from him, Dream’s gonna stop?”

Phil let out a conflicted sigh. “I know, but doesn’t Tommy deserve a say?”

“Sure,” Technoblade said easily. “Why don’t we ask him now?”

Phil’s voice faltered. “What do you mean?”

Tommy could practically see the way Technoblade cocked his head, a little smile curling on his lips. “He’s listening.”

Tommy’s blood ran cold in the same instant as Phil uttered a startled, “What?”

Technoblade’s voice was casual. Unbothered. “Come on out, Tommy.”

The apology was already falling from his lips as he stepped out from behind the wall. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to eavesdrop—”

Technoblade cut him off easily. “It’s all right, kid. You have just as much stake in this as anyone. More, even.” He winked at Phil. “You’ve gotten out of practice, Dad. You used to be able to hear us eavesdropping from a mile away.”

“It’s his old age catching up to him,” Tommy quipped, and though he was nervous about making such a joke when tensions were so high, the laugh it drew from Technoblade and the quiet smile it drew from Phil made it more than worthwhile.

“Come here, Toms,” Technoblade said, beckoning him into the kitchen. “We shouldn’t have been having this conversation without you.”

“Agreed,” Phil said, turning his eyes to Tommy. Tommy nearly shrunk under his gaze, but his father’s voice was gentle and his eyes were kinder than anything Tommy deserved. “What do *you* want, Tommy?”

“I...” Tommy looked away then, his tail flicking up to wrap around his waist in his best attempt at self-soothing. He held it in his hands, felt the fur, clean and soft and so strange to him even now after all those months of mats. He thought about the beach, the way sand and ash found its way into every nook and cranny of his tent, no matter how hard he tried to keep it clean. How Dream would punish him for it, for the very ground he walked on. For the ash Dream himself created as he destroyed everything Tommy had ever held dear. He thought about Dream’s voice, cool and uncaring, as it convinced Tommy that— save for the hero he had in Dream— Tommy was fundamentally unlovable. He thought about how he was still unlearning that last bit. How it was a fight every day to remember that he was worth more than the pieces he’d been broken into on that beach.

Resolve solidified in his chest and the words came out steadier than he expected. “I want him dead.”

The smile that curled on Technoblade’s lips was downright menacing, but it sparked no fear in Tommy’s chest.

“It would be my pleasure.”

Like the look in Technoblade’s eye, that response should have frightened Tommy. Instead, it poured a foundation into the perpetual hole in his stomach and sealed it. Tommy seized that newfound steadiness and met Technoblade’s smile with a hesitant one of his own.

“Techno, if you just wait a few days—”

“I’m not waiting.” Technoblade’s tone left no room for argument, but that had never stopped his father before.

“I don’t want you going without backup. I’m injured now, but if you just *wait*—”

“Dad!” Technoblade whirled around from where he was saddling up Carl. “I’m not waiting. You don’t—” He sighed, sharp and frustrated. “You’re not there at night. You don’t see him. If you think I’m letting Tommy go through one more goddamn night with the knowledge that his torturer is still out there, then you don’t know me very well at all.” The frustration dropped from his tone then, replaced by resolve. “I’m doing this now.”

“Techno?”

The tension dropped from both Phil and Technoblade’s shoulders at the sound of the stable door creaking open and Tommy’s hesitant call.

“Hey, Toms, come in.”

Despite the invitation, Tommy entered the stable timidly, like he wasn’t sure if he was interrupting something or not.

“If you want to wait for Phil, it’s fine with me.” Tommy’s voice was small—the way it never used to be—and his eyes darted between Technoblade, Phil, and Carl. “It’s not the end of the world if we need to wait a few days—”

“Tommy.” Technoblade stepped forward, catching Tommy gently by the shoulders and kneeling in front of him. He locked his eyes with Tommy’s. “To me, it is the end of the world if you don’t feel safe.”

Tommy blinked at him, his eyes blue and watery. He’d always been such a crybaby when he was younger, and before this, it had been ammunition—something to tease him for. Now, it only tugged at Technoblade’s heartstrings.

“Okay,” Tommy whispered. “If you’re sure.”

“I’m sure.” His hands still planted firmly on Tommy’s shoulder’s, Technoblade stood. “Phil’s gonna stay here with you while I go. Now, do you have any idea where Dream might be? Any information you can give me will help.”

Tommy’s eyes darted in thought. “I think he might have a place near...” He swallowed visibly, but steeled himself. “Near Logsteadshire. He always showed up at weird times, so I thought maybe he had a house out there...”

Technoblade nodded. “I understand.”

He let go of Tommy then, moving back to finish saddling up Carl. But as he turned, he found the task complete, his father holding the reins out to him.

“Go get him,” Phil said simply. “We’ll be here.”

Technoblade nodded. Sure-footed, he led Carl out of the stable and swung up into the saddle. His armor was a familiar weight, his sword a comfort at his side.

He allowed himself one last look back at his splintered family. Tommy was stiff under Phil’s arm, standing in the shadow of his one good wing. His skin was as pale as the snow around

him, but there was a determination in his expression Technoblade hadn't seen in a long time. It was a relief to see now. He tipped two fingers in a salute before he snapped the reins and took off.

The journey was long, but for every minute Technoblade spent riding, that was another minute he spent planning. He'd always been strategic—undefeated in chess since the age of twelve, much to Wilbur's chagrin—and now, he was plotting the most important checkmate of all.

He anchored his location to Logsteadshire, then fanned out around it. From there, it didn't take long to locate the simple house, especially not with the smoke pouring from its chimney.

He dismounted Carl a good few hundred yards away, before creeping silently through the trees towards the scent of the hearth. It felt eerily similar to his reunion with Tommy on the beach, only this time, he had a much more satisfying goal in mind.

He found his target just outside the house, skinning a deer. Fitting. He was already bloody. Technoblade only needed to add to it.

He stepped out from the trees, his armor shining in the afternoon light.

Dream couldn't fully hide his startled inhale, or the half-step back he took as he raised his skinning knife.

"Hope you're not planning on using that today," Technoblade said flatly. "It'd be over far too quick. No fun for either of us."

"Technoblade." Dream's voice was even, but the way he shifted back from the skinning table told Technoblade everything he needed to know about Dream's current state. He was caught off guard. Unprepared. "What can I do for you?"

Technoblade drew his sword. "You can die."

Dream's shoulders slumped, like he was disappointed. "I have to say, this is getting old. Can't we think of anything better to do than fight over *Tommy* of all people?"

Fury burned in Technoblade's chest and he took an advancing step forward, twirling his sword in his hand. "Draw your sword, Dream, or this is going to be quicker than either of us wants it to be."

Dream considered that right up until the moment Technoblade lost his patience.

"Fine," Technoblade snapped, and lunged.

Stumbling back, Dream only barely managed to snag an axe and yank it up, just in time to deflect Technoblade's first swing.

But the axe was iron against Technoblade's netherite blade; it didn't stand to last long and Technoblade planned to use that to his advantage. So he went with brute strength, slamming

his sword into Dream's axe over and over again, until the feeble weapon splintered under Technoblade's final blow.

Dream staggered back, thrown off-balance by the sudden loss of his weapon. Technoblade was sure his eyes were wide beneath that mask as Technoblade raised his sword.

"Just one more." Technoblade's smile was all teeth as he brought his blade down on Dream's neck. "See you for the next one."

[Dream] was slain by [Technoblade].

As Dream's body disappeared, Technoblade found he was almost disappointed. He would have liked to watch the man choke on his own blood for just a little while longer.

He stepped away from the indent Dream's body had left in the dirt, and stood, panting, his sword held loosely at his side. Dream's respawn point couldn't be far from here, likely just inside the cabin. Technoblade was happy to wait.

So he did. He waited. And waited. But Dream didn't show.

And all the while, dread grew like moss around his insides, until his instincts were hammering out an alarm in his head:

This isn't right! Get to the kit! Something isn't right!

Dream hadn't respawned here. Which meant that Dream had respawned somewhere else.

With his heart in his throat, Technoblade took off for home.

[Dream] was slain by [Technoblade].

Tommy felt a shudder exit his body at the sight of the first death message. He didn't quite know what he was waiting for, but that seemed to do half the trick. He gripped his communicator a little tighter, waited for the next, and prayed that the names wouldn't be reversed.

They wouldn't. Of course they wouldn't. It was Technoblade.

Like he could read his mind, Phil smiled at him tightly. "He's gonna be fine, mate." Though his voice was steady, he couldn't hide his own nerves as he paced the room.

Tommy watched him for a moment, smiling to himself as he recognized Technoblade's stiff shoulders and Wilbur's busy hands in their father. He wondered what he had of his father's; he liked to think he had his eyes, though he knew that was a ridiculous notion, given his adopted status.

"Phil?"

Phil hummed, glancing over at Tommy where he was curled on the couch.

“Are you nervous?”

“No,” Phil said, halting his pacing and turning to look at Tommy. “It’s Technoblade.”

Tommy just arched his brow.

Phil seemed to realize he’d fooled exactly no one and let out a sigh, his shoulders slumping. “Of course I’m worried. He’s my son.” He gave Tommy a little smile. “I’m never not going to worry about you three.”

That hole in Tommy’s chest grew just a little bit smaller.

“I wish—”

I wish you would stay.

I wish Wilbur was here.

I wish we could be a family again.

Those were all things he would have said had he not been cut off by the deafening shatter of the front window.

Tommy screamed as Phil staggered forward. Phil’s face held a strange look as he dropped to his knees with a strangled grunt. Blood was spreading steadily from his shoulder and Tommy could see where the barbed tip of a crossbow bolt poked through the front of Phil’s shirt.

“Phil?” Tommy scrambled off the couch, dropping to his knees in front of his father and reaching with frantic, trembling hands for the injury. “Dad!”

“It’s okay,” Phil managed, catching Tommy’s wrist with his good hand and guiding it down. His voice was strained as he motioned painfully. “Tommy, I need you to get my sword—”

The front door crashed open. Tommy couldn’t help the terrified squeak that fled his throat as he met the blank eyes of an all-too-familiar mask over Phil’s shoulder.

“Tommy,” Phil repeated a little more urgently. “My sword—”

“No, no, no.” Tommy was whimpering as he dragged himself backwards, not stopping until his back collided with the couch.

Dream stepped into the house. Tommy couldn’t tear his eyes off of him,

“Tommy!”

That shout was enough to cut through the thick layer of panic coating Tommy’s psyche and he startled, regaining awareness just long enough to kick Phil’s sword across the floor to him.

With his bloody arm curled tight to his chest, Phil seized his sword and rose with a swing.

He started out strong, his whole weight thrown behind each swing, but his injury was taking its toll on him and it showed.

His blade clashed loudly against Dream's, but this time, Dream held his sword steady before shoving back against Phil's. Phil staggered, off-balance, his sword falling slightly. That was all it took.

Dream's swordsmanship was swift and precise as he slashed ruthlessly at Phil. Phil was only barely parrying each swing now and as he lurched back to avoid a particularly wide arc of Dream's blade, he stumbled again.

"Dad!" The scream burned in Tommy's throat and he watched in horror as Dream slashed into the meat of Phil's wing.

Phil dropped to his knees with a pained cry. That was all he managed before the hilt of Dream's sword collided with his head and he dropped, motionless, to the floor.

Tommy was panting, staring with wide eyes as the last line of defense between himself and his worst nightmare fell. (His father. Oh, gods, his *father*.)

Slowly, mechanically, Dream turned to look at Tommy. That blank smile etched into his mask had never been more frightening than it was in this moment.

"You've proven yourself to be an awful lot of trouble, haven't you, darling?"

"No," Tommy whimpered, crawling backwards. "No, *please*—"

"Don't make this harder than it has to be." Dream's voice was sharp and Tommy flinched at the venom in it.

His back was to the wall now, his legs curled beneath him in a crouch. Every inch of him was shaking.

"I think it's time you come home."

Tommy's jaw clenched with nausea and he leaned back further, pressing his spine into the wall despite the discomfort. His mind was racing, his instincts warring with his half-hearted desire to just go limp and let Dream do what he wanted. But his father was on the ground and if Tommy let Dream win, who knew what would become of Phil?

Tommy took a deep breath and steeled himself. It didn't stop his hands from trembling. "This is my home. I don't—I don't belong to you."

Dream's head tilted dangerously. "Is that so? Then who do you think you belong to?" The question was sneered, asked with the kind of condescension that told of a disbelieving speaker.

"No one," Tommy said, shaky but fierce. "I'm my own."

With that, he made his choice: He would fight. Fight like Technoblade had taught him so long ago.

Technoblade's favorite decoration was weaponry— because *of course* it was— and if Tommy's terror-rattled mind was remembering correctly, there was a sword resting on a hook somewhere above him. It was just his size, a longsword in his hands and a shortsword in Technoblade's. He didn't know if it was sharp— didn't know if it was even *there*, for gods' sakes— but he had to try.

His fear didn't shrink— it was as strong as it had ever been— but his courage grew to match it.

With a desperate gasp, Tommy lurched upwards, his hand outstretched until it collided with heavy metal and he closed his fingers around the hilt of the old sword.

He gripped the sword in both hands, his pointed teeth bared as he glared at Dream.

Dream let out a little laugh, but he didn't sound happy. "Put down the sword, Tommy."

"No." As loud as his fear was, it was drowned out by his resolve. He was done following orders.

Dream sighed. He sounded irritated. "I'm not playing this little game with you—"

Tommy didn't let him finish. With a cry, he lunged forward, his sword raised.

Surprised, Dream only barely managed to bring his blade up quickly enough to parry Tommy's. Their swords crashed together, the sound echoing in the small room.

Just inches from those soulless eyes, Tommy leaned his weight behind his sword and snarled, "Fuck you."

Then he lurched forward and sunk his teeth into Dream's wrist.

From there, Tommy's memory was a blur. He vaguely remembered the rush of a blade as it whistled past his ears, the sting of torn skin, the heavy ache of his muscles as he swung again and again. He wouldn't stop. Each time he began to tire, he thought of the scent of sulfur mixed with sea salt, and let his rage ignite again.

Dream was faltering now, blood dripping steadily from a gash on his calf. Tommy didn't remember landing a hit there, but he must have. He supposed he must have been the reason for all the blood leaking from Dream's skin.

"Tommy, we're friends," Dream implored, stumbling backwards. Gods, Tommy hated that tone he took, when Tommy was being stupid and Dream just couldn't wait to point it out.

"You're not my friend!" Tommy screamed, landing another slash on Dream's shoulder. "Friends don't hurt each other! They don't trick each other! Friends don't kill each other's pets!"

Dream lurched back, only barely avoiding Tommy's wild swing, but he still found the strength to chuckle breathlessly. "What are you talking about?"

"Henrietta!" With the strength of her name on his tongue, Tommy swung again. This time, it landed, taking a chunk of flesh out of Dream's upper arm. Dream cursed and staggered back. He barely managed to bring his sword up to block another slash.

"The chicken?" Dream sounded confused. "Tommy, *you* killed that chicken."

"Shut up!" Tommy swung with both hands, wild and unrestrained. He caught the edge of Dream's thigh, taking a modicum of satisfaction from the pained noise he drew. He advanced further. "I didn't kill Henrietta! I loved her!"

Dream was faltering now, blood dripping steadily from the large gash on his calf.

"You always do this!" Tommy screamed. "You try to trick me!"

He knocked Dream's next blow away, hard enough to send Dream's sword skittering to the ground. Dream was quick to follow as Tommy landed a harsh kick to his knee that sent him sprawling onto his back.

Tommy secured him with his sword at his throat and his boot planted firmly on Dream's throat. Dream wheezed under Tommy's weight, his good arm coming up to scrabble uselessly at Tommy's boot.

"You can't trick me anymore," Tommy snarled. "Not if you can't speak."

Tommy stomped down, the flat of his boot landing on the jutting part of Dream's collarbone. Dream let out a strangled cry as Tommy felt the bone snap beneath his boot.

"*Tommy—*"

Tommy jammed his boot harder into Dream's now-broken collarbone and watched in satisfaction as the man writhed beneath him. He leaned down and hissed, "You hold no power." And even though his voice came out shaky and small, he found that he believed it.

Suddenly, like an explosion, the front door slammed open.

"Tommy!" Technoblade was panting in the doorway, his sword raised in his grip. "Tommy —" He cut off when he spotted Dream on the floor beneath Tommy's boot.

Dream's voice rose again, thin with desperation. "Tommy! He's going to kill you!"

Tommy's veins were flooded with adrenaline, enough to confuse his fear. He didn't know what to do. So he let his body decide. Before he could register his own movement, he jerked the crossbow up and leveled it at Technoblade. "Stay away!"

Technoblade froze, just yards away. He dropped his sword and it clattered loudly on the hardwood floor.

“You can’t trust him, Tommy!” Tommy could hear the desperation in Dream’s tone now, his voice growing thin. “He’s trying to trick you! I’m the only one who will tell you the truth!”

Tommy stared at Technoblade, at the trigger end of his shaking crossbow. Technoblade’s hands were raised in a familiar gesture, his expression calm.

“Tommy,” Technoblade said, low and steady. “Don’t listen to Dream. Don’t listen to me. Trust *yourself*.”

Tommy’s finger wavered over the trigger. He looked back down at Dream, who was still kicking and fighting beneath Tommy’s boot.

“You need me,” Dream said desperately. Tommy could hear him losing confidence, his certainty in Tommy’s eventual obedience wavering. “No one’s ever gonna love you like I do.”

“You don’t love me,” Tommy said coldly. “You never did.”

“And you think he does?” Dream’s voice was growing wheezier by the second, worsened by the increasing pressure of Tommy’s foot on his sternum. “You think once you overstay your welcome— once you start being a bother— he’s gonna wanna keep you around? I’m the only one who can put up with you, you know that!”

Once upon a time, these words would have taken hold in Tommy’s mind, would have cemented themselves as a permanent tenant of his belief system. But this was now. Now, Tommy heard them, processed them, and rightfully rejected them.

“I’ve been a bother my whole life,” Tommy said, his lips curled in some mixture of a sneer and a proud smile. “That’s never kept my family from loving me.”

Tommy dropped the crossbow from Technoblade to Dream. He could see Dream twisting at the end of the bolt, struggling in vain to get away.

Tommy’s voice shook, but in this moment, he was more certain than he’d ever been in his life. “The only unloved one here is you, Dream.”

The crossbow bolt shattered Dream’s mask and found its home right between his eyes.

[Dream] was slain by [Tommyinnit].

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked this one! I worked super hard on it! Comments are beloved <3

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

They are famblee :)

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Mentions of blood/violence, mentions of injury

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy dropped his sword. It clattered to the floor, the loudest sound he had ever heard in his life. It topped every explosion that had ever echoed across the beaches of Logsteadshire.

Dream's body was gone. It was gone and so was Dream, and for the first time since he'd stepped outside of the walls of L'Manberg, Tommy didn't feel like a black hole of a person anymore.

His breath was hitching. His hands were bloody as he pressed them to his face, dropped to his knees, and started to cry. All at once, he was choking out sobs amid words, unintelligible even to himself as he covered his face with his hands. It was that little-kid-cry, coughing and choking on his own spit as everything he'd kept locked inside poured out of him like a shattered dam.

"Tommy. Hey, hey." In an instant, he was enveloped in Technoblade's arms. He could feel blood soaking into his feet, the leftovers of what he'd spilled from Dream.

"I'm here. He's dead. You're safe."

Tommy sobbed. Then—

"Dad—" Tommy wheezed, jerking out of Technoblade's hold and whirling to find his father.

"He's okay," Technoblade said, catching Tommy around the waist and holding him back. "I checked him when I came in and I'm gonna take care of him. But you need to sit down before you collapse, yeah?"

"Collapse?" Tommy echoed. Then he realized: His legs were trembling hard enough to register on an earthquake monitor and if not for Technoblade's strong arms around him, he would probably have been a quivering heap on the floor right about then. "Oh."

“Yeah,” Technoblade said, with a quiet huff of laughter. “Oh.” He tugged Tommy gently to the couch and sat him down on it. Tommy tried to pull him down with him, but Technoblade grabbed his hands with his own and eased them away. “I need to take care of Dad.”

Tommy nodded, watching numbly as Technoblade shifted to Phil’s side and doused him with a healing potion.

“He’s okay,” Technoblade repeated, not turning from where he knelt over Phil. “It was the hit to the head that took him out. The bolt got him in the shoulder— it didn’t hit anything important.”

Tommy could see the cut along Phil’s hairline glowing purple, sealing itself with the healing properties of the potion. Technoblade’s body blocked his view of the rest of Phil’s injuries, but Tommy trusted his brother to tell him the truth.

With his eyes locked on his father’s sleeping face, Tommy said, “He got hurt for me.”

“He loves you,” Technoblade said simply.

Tommy nodded, his throat tight. “I know.” For once, he was telling the truth.

He was quiet as he watched Technoblade lift their father and stand. Tommy followed them to Technoblade’s bedroom, where Technoblade laid Phil down on the rumpled blankets. He didn’t seem to care that blood was seeping into the sheets. Phil’s wounds were closing though, still shimmering under the potions’ effects.

“He’ll be sore for a few days, but he shouldn’t have any lasting effects,” Technoblade said, settling himself down on the bed next to Phil with his back against the headboard. He lifted his arm and Tommy didn’t hesitate to bury himself in his brother’s side. Technoblade wrapped a strong arm around him, hitching him a little closer.

Uncertain, Tommy hummed out a questioning little purr.

Is this safe?

Am I good?

Can I relax?

It was answered by the tightening of Technoblade’s arm around him and a deep, rumbling purr that sent a wave of calm echoing through his body. He slumped even further into Technoblade’s side, his eyelids drooping and his body going lax. Automatic purrs were drawn from his chest, matching Technoblade’s like he was made to be held by him.

“Tommy.” Technoblade’s voice was a low rumble, hardly distinguishable from his purrs. “I’m proud of you.” He drew back a little and Tommy whined instinctively, but Technoblade only reached to cup his cheek in his massive hand, drawing his chin up to meet his eyes and repeating, *“I’m so proud of you.”*

Tommy nodded. His throat was bobbing again and fresh tears were spilling out too fast for Technoblade's thumbs to catch, so Tommy just buried himself back in his brother's arms.

"I'm so sorry." Technoblade sounded quietly devastated and Tommy could feel where his hands shook as they clutched him a little tighter. "I realized too late that he'd set his respawn point here, rather than close to me. I should have known, I should have—"

"Stop." It came out a whine, but Tommy meant it firmly. "It's not your fault." He pressed his cheek tight against Technoblade's chest and did his best to emulate the comforting purrs his older brother always provided for him. He felt Technoblade's exhaled laugh in his hair and his ears flicked at the tickling sensation.

"All right," Technoblade murmured, pulling Tommy closer until his legs were over his lap and he had Tommy fully in his arms. "No more "should haves" for me, but the same goes for you. I already told you, but I'm gonna tell you again— You did the right thing. I'm proud of you."

Tommy flushed happily, a little *chir* purring up through his throat. His cheeks were still damp with tears, but they were no longer falling anew.

They sat there for a long time, until Tommy was half-dozing to the steady beat of Technoblade's heart.

Then Phil shifted beside them.

The first word out of Phil's mouth when he woke was a gasped, "*Tommy.*"

Technoblade caught his reaching hand in his own, easing it back down to the bed. "He's okay," he reassured him, shifting Tommy on his lap to better reach for Phil. "But you're not yet, so stay still."

Phil blinked, his eyes wide and blue like Tommy's because Tommy was his, his flock, his gaze, his *family*. "Tommy," he repeated, his eyes darting in search of his youngest son.

Tommy crawled out of Technoblade's lap and settled himself on the bed between Phil and Technoblade. He pressed up close to Phil's side, careful to avoid his still-healing injuries.

"I'm okay," he said, hugging Phil's arm close to his chest and burying his face in his good shoulder. "I'm okay, I promise."

Phil let out a shaky exhale and Tommy felt it as it tickled his ears.

Phil's hand found his back and though he was weak, his touch was firm where he pressed him a little closer. "Toms, sweetheart."

Tommy felt Technoblade stiffen beside him at the nickname, but Tommy didn't have the care or energy to be frightened. This was his father, who spoke those names because he treasured him and for no other reason.

"Dad," Tommy whispered, and his voice broke where it was muffled in Phil's side.

“You’re safe.” Phil said it like it was something he was telling himself.

“I’m safe,” Tommy repeated, because maybe they both needed to hear it again. He still couldn’t quite believe it— couldn’t believe that the blood staining his feet was Dream’s. He was still scared to close his eyes or walk into a room alone— not yet convinced of the knowledge that Dream wouldn’t be there, lying in wait. But just because he didn’t believe it didn’t mean it wasn’t true. It would take time, he knew, for his nightmares to fade and for panic to no longer be his first instinct. There was a long way to go, but the path was clear and he wasn’t alone.

Phil’s voice was hoarse and painful in his hair. “Sweetheart, I’m so sorry. I should have—”

“Stop it,” Tommy said, lifting his head to meet his father’s red-rimmed eyes. “I already told Techno— no blame game. It’s no one’s fault.”

“Except Dream’s,” Technoblade voiced from above.

Tommy liked the sound of that. “Except Dream’s.”

“Okay,” his father said, giving Tommy a shaky smile. “I guess I can agree to that.”

Tommy dropped his head again, just in time for his father to plant a kiss on his hair, right between his ears. It wasn’t long before Phil drifted off again, the humming magic of a regeneration potion lulling him to sleep.

Tommy could tell he was going to be soon to follow, with the way his eyelids were drooping and limbs were fading away at the ends.

“I’m gonna fall asleep,” Tommy warned, lifting his head and peering through scrunched up eyes at Technoblade.

His brother met him with a small smile. “That’s all right,” he said, placing a heavy hand on Tommy’s head and pushing him gently back down. “Sleep. I’ll be here.”

Tommy was too happy to argue.

Tommy spent most of his time these days in and out of Phil and Technoblade’s laps. He’d always been hypertactile as a kit, and ever since the weight of Dream had been lifted from his shoulders, that tendency had returned with a vengeance. Any chance he could get, he was either hanging off or crawling all over one of them.

It got to the point that one night over dinner, Phil jokingly suggested they bring out the old baby sling they used to use when Tommy was a toddler.

That, Tommy drew the line at.

But despite the humorous threat, Tommy didn’t cease his constant clawing for attention and affection. Fortunately for him, his family was more than willing to provide it, though he was

often met with Technoblade's half-hearted huffs and eyerolls.

Just that afternoon, he'd fought for a place in Technoblade's lap on the couch, curled into the man as Technoblade read a book over Tommy's head.

Phil was out—he'd mentioned an errand at breakfast that morning—but Tommy expected he would be returning soon.

Sure enough, the front door opened not long after he and Technoblade had settled down in the living room, and Phil poked his head in.

"Tommy, there's someone here who wants to see you." Though Phil's tone was relaxed, Tommy found himself stiffening. He didn't like visitors and he felt pretty justified in that. But as the door was pushed fully open and brown hair and golden rims perched on the edge of a long nose came into view, Tommy's reservations melted on the spot.

"Wil!"

Tommy was up and out of Technoblade's lap in an instant—much to Technoblade's chagrin—slipping and scrambling across the hardwood floor until he collided bodily with Wilbur.

Wilbur grunted at the impact, but he didn't hesitate in wrapping his arms around Tommy in return and clutching him tight to his chest.

"Wil, Wil, Wil." Tommy couldn't help the way his brother's name spilled from his lips with more delight than he'd known he was capable of expressing.

"Tommy, Tommy, Tommy," Wilbur echoed, breathless with laughter or maybe tears. Tommy couldn't tell the difference even in himself right now.

He pulled back just enough to peer up at Wilbur, his tail swaying up to brush against Wilbur's wrist where he held him.

Wilbur seemed healthier—he wasn't so bony when Tommy hugged him and the sallow color that had long since decorated his hollowed cheeks was gone, replaced by a healthy flush. He looked happy. Whole. Tommy drew him back in and squeezed him tighter.

Wilbur's voice was low and thick in his ear. "I missed you, kiddo."

Tommy's throat was too tight to muster anything more than a pitched, "Me too." But he more than made up for it by squeezing the life out of Wilbur. Fortunately, Wilbur seemed just as inclined to do the same to him.

Finally, they both pulled back.

"You made me cry again," Tommy whined, glaring up at Wilbur half-heartedly. "Dickhead."

Wilbur laughed and gave a little shrug. His eyes were damp too. "Sorry."

“Come sit.” Tommy dragged Wilbur to the couch and shoved him down next to Technoblade. Wilbur leaned into Technoblade’s side, his lips curved in an affectionate smile as he whispered something in Technoblade’s ear.

Technoblade let out a huff of laughter. “Yeah, whatever,” he muttered with a roll of his eyes. “I missed you too, I guess.”

Tommy interrupted their little reunion when he clambered onto Wilbur’s lap, prompting a pained yelp from Wilbur when he accidentally jammed a knee into his stomach. Wilbur shifted to accommodate him, his arms coming up to wrap around Tommy all over again. Tommy pressed close, his tail curling up to loop around Wilbur’s waist with a quiet purr.

Wilbur let out a contented hum. “I’ve missed that sound,” he murmured, dropping a kiss on the curls between Tommy’s ears.

Tommy whined and squirmed away from the kiss, even though he didn’t really mind. “I’m not a little kid,” he said indignantly. He didn’t loosen his grip on Wilbur by an inch.

Wilbur huffed out a laugh. “You’ll always be a little kid to me.”

Despite it going against everything he stood for, Tommy found he didn’t really mind this declaration when it came from his big brother. So he didn’t argue, just pressing a little further into Wilbur’s chest and soothing himself with the steady beat of his heart.

“I’m sorry,” Wilbur whispered into his hair. “I’m so sorry. I should never have left.”

Tommy pulled back just enough to glare at him. “Stop it. You were sick. You couldn’t help it. Besides, you didn’t know what would happen.”

Wilbur didn’t look content with that answer. “I should have—”

“Stop!” Tommy insisted. It came out whiny, but he didn’t really care. “What should you have done? Stayed and gotten worse?” He could feel fresh tears pricking at his eyes and he glared a little harder at Wilbur for making him cry again. “I needed my brother back, Wil. I wouldn’t have gotten that if you’d stayed.”

Wilbur swallowed and his throat bobbed visibly.

“It’s no one’s fault,” Tommy said fiercely. “If it’s not mine, then it’s not yours or Dad’s or Techno’s. Deal?”

Wilbur gave him a wobbly smile. “Deal.” His next hug was almost suffocating. Tommy loved it.

“Don’t leave,” Tommy said before he could think better of it. It came out half pleading, muffled from where his face was buried in Wilbur’s chest. “Please, I don’t... I don’t want anything to change.” He hated voicing that desire, knew that if he were loved any less, it could be so easily used against him. But he was desperate. More than that, he was loved. As much as it pushed against his fear-honed instincts, Tommy knew he was safe speaking the truth of his desires here.

“Oh, bud.” Wilbur’s hand pushed through his hair before falling to wrap him back up in tight arms. “I’m not going anywhere. Not for a long time.”

“No one’s leaving,” Phil agreed. “I think it’s time we all stuck around for a while.” His voice softened with a smile. “Became a family again.”

Tommy drew away just enough to look up at Phil. He’d settled himself on Wilbur’s other side, his arm wrapped around Wilbur’s shoulders, his hand settling on the back of Technoblade’s neck.

“Really?”

“Really,” Phil confirmed. “It’s been too long.”

“Does this mean I’m gonna have to build more bedrooms?” Technoblade’s flat question surprised them all and it drew a laugh from Tommy’s lips.

“Sorry, mate,” Phil said, ruffling Technoblade’s carefully-plaited hair. Technoblade ducked with a hiss, his nose scrunching up, but Tommy didn’t miss the little smile that curled on his lips. “Looks like we’re moving in.”

“I’m instigating a chore chart,” Technoblade said instantly.

That reminded Tommy: “Oh! Wil, I have to show you my chicks!”

Wilbur gave a surprised laugh, pulling back just enough that Tommy could tip his head up and meet his eyes. For some reason, he looked incredulous. “Your *chicks*?”

“There’s twelve!”

Wilbur’s eyes grew impossibly wide. “*Twelve*?”

“They’re chickens, Wilbur,” Technoblade informed him. “Tommy’s not bringing home any girls.”

Tommy squawked and flushed. “Hey! I could!” Then he met Wilbur’s eyes and shrugged a little sheepishly. “But, yeah. They’re chickens.”

Wilbur’s wheezing laugh was contagious.

“All right,” he said, once he managed to get his laughter under control. “You can show me your chicks later. But not yet.” He held Tommy a little tighter, pressing his nose to the spot just between Tommy’s twitching ears. “Not yet.”

Tommy could live with that. He was pretty sure he could live with anything if it meant staying in Wilbur’s arms. He squirmed a little, but only to free his hand from where it was trapped between his body and Wilbur’s. He snaked it out of the embrace and found Technoblade’s, whose fingers enveloped his own like a reflex.

This was love. Tommy wondered how he'd ever confused it for anything else. He closed his eyes, doing his very best to commit every inch of this to memory. But if he couldn't right now, he supposed that was all right. He had a very long time to memorize this and he was going to make it count.

Chapter End Notes

I had so much fun writing this one, guys, and especially interacting with so many people in the comments!! Y'all are so cool and reading your comments makes my day <3

End Notes

Thank you for reading!!

I don't have most of the chapters already written like normal, so updates will take a few days.
But comments make me write faster, so if you're enjoying it, PLEASE leave a comment!!
They are like air to me, I love them <3333

Works inspired by this one

[Head in the sky_\(tasting the clouds\)](#) by [BubblesCrumbles](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!